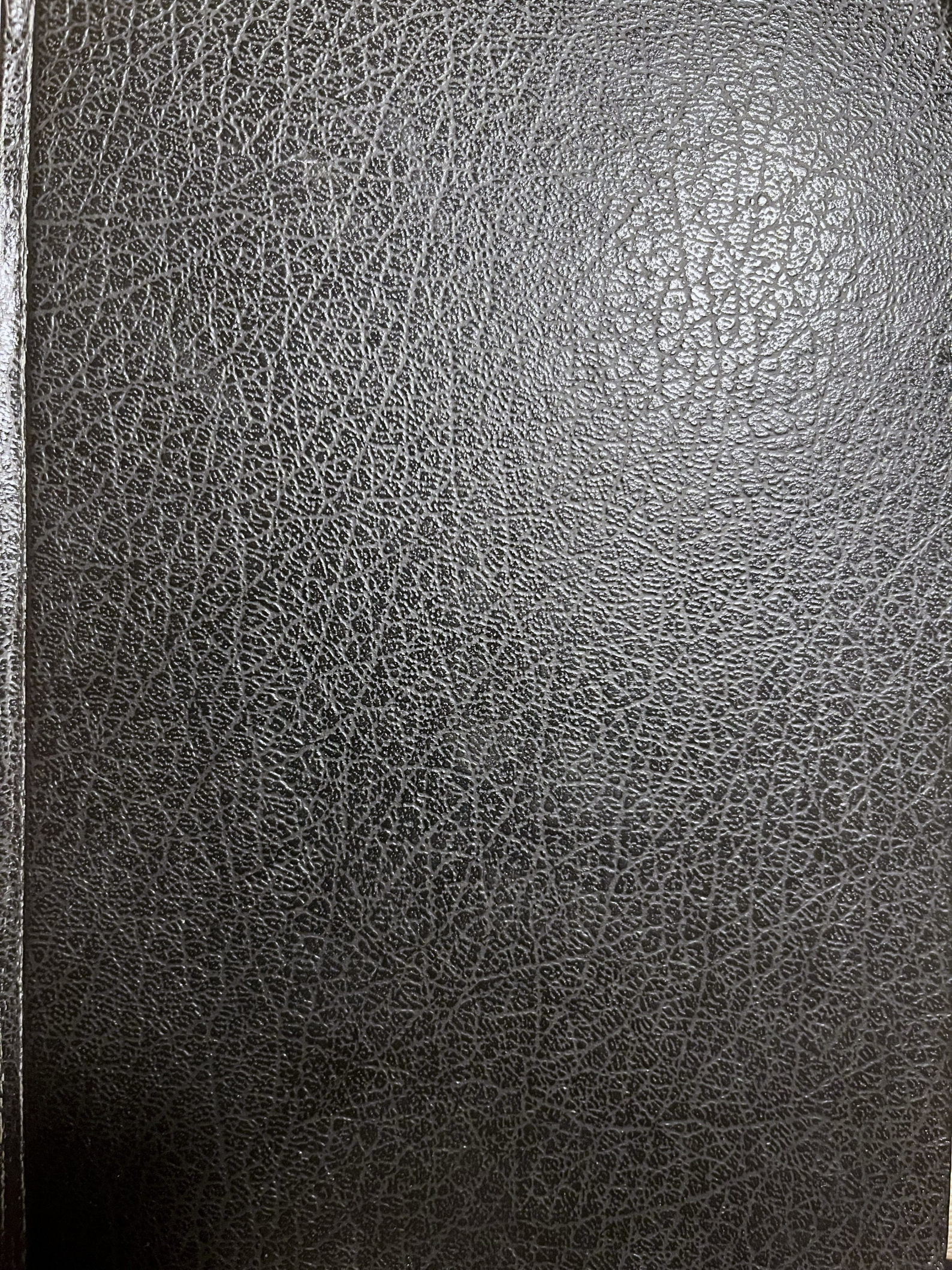




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FACULTAS THEOLOGIAE

THE SOTERIOLOGY OF GUSTAF AULÉN:
The Origins, Development and Relevancy
of the Christus Victor Atonement View

Text and Bibliography

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JOSEPH J. ANDERLONIS

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In Memoriam

Gustaf Aulén

Theologian, Professor, Churchman

Herald of Christ's Victory

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FOREWORD

While engaged in graduate study at the Gregorian University some time ago, Professor Gerald O'Collins, S.J. suggested to me the possibility of writing a dissertation on Gustaf Aulén's Christus Victor theme. Reading Aulén's well-known book for the first time, I was struck by two features: its simplicity and its bold proposition. Aulén's Olaus Petri lectures presented an intriguing hypothesis, and I soon determined to study his theology in more detail. Little did I realize at that time how far the journey into exploring Aulén's soteriology would eventually take me.

If a doctoral dissertation's purpose is not only to produce a creative supplement to the body of information, but also to educate the researcher in a broadening of research skills and experience, then this study is a marked success. The written production here manifests only a portion of what has been an extremely fruitful enterprise. While this investigation looked primarily at Aulén and Swedish theology, it also gave me the means of renewing appreciation for the entire scope of Christian theology, especially in the figures of Irenaeus, Anselm, and Luther. Likewise, a whole new world gradually opened before my eyes in getting to know and to value the notable contributions of Nathan Söderblom and Einar Billing.

My educational journey was not only theological, but geographic as well. In June and July of 1977, and again in November, 1986, I enjoyed two visits to Aulén's Lund. On

the first occasion, I met for several days with Aulén at his home. At first, I did not know what to expect, particularly because of Aulén's age; yet what resulted was beyond all I could have imagined. The warmth, interest, and humanity of this personable and affable man has remained a special gift to me during the reading of thousands of his words throughout my research. In a very real sense, his presence has accompanied me all along the way. Acknowledging many limitations, I trust that Aulén is pleased with all of my effort. During my visit, Aulén read and commented on a preliminary draft of the Irenaeus section, and we discussed many of the points and books which appear in the first three chapters. Our conversations were informative, stimulating, and a pure delight. I was indeed fortunate to have had this privilege since Aulén died a few months later after a brief illness. My second trip to Lund gave me the opportunity of meeting with several of Aulén's colleagues. They received me graciously and provided many insights into Aulén, not only as a theologian but as a fellow Christian and friend whom they deeply revere. These two visits to Lund added a personally rewarding dimension to what might otherwise have been just a routine, academic project.

Many persons and institutions assisted me during this project and I wish to acknowledge them with sincere appreciation.

I am grateful to the staffs of the following libraries for their aid in my research: the Krauth Library of the

Lutheran Theological Seminary (Philadelphia); the Ryan Memorial Library of St. Charles Seminary (Philadelphia); the Neumann College Library (Aston, PA); Union Theological Seminary Library (New York); Princeton Theological Seminary Library (Princeton, NJ).

Also, I wish to thank several of Aulén's colleagues who shared with me their personal and professional reflections about many of the critical areas in Aulén's thought. My conversations with them in Lund in November, 1986, have proven most helpful. I am grateful to: Per Erik Persson, Gustaf Wingren, Benkt-Erik and Britta Benktson, and Birger Gerhardsson. In addition, I thank Per Ekström, Aulén's bibliographer, who guided me with Aulén's personal papers in the manuscript department of the Lund University Library.

During the course of this research, I have been supported and encouraged by my people with whom I have ministered as a parish priest and as a teacher. May the Lord reward their kindness. I think especially of the people of Resurrection Parish (Chester, PA), Holy Saviour Parish (Linwood, PA), St. George's Parish (Philadelphia), and of my students and fellow faculty of Neumann College (Aston, PA).

To my director, Gerald O'Collins, I owe more than just simple thanks. Much of my activity, as a parish priest and theology teacher, has been influenced by his creative

professionalism and his inspiring enthusiasm for theology. His patience and guidance have assisted me greatly.

I am indebted also to my typists who have borne a tedious part of this endeavor: Mary Crist, Elizabeth Markowski, and my secretary, Carol Romano. Likewise, I am thankful for the constant support over the years and through a variety of obstacles, which I have received from two dear friends: Judith M. Hanavin and my mother, Ida (d. 1981). They gave me their love and much strength.

Finally, my heartfelt affection extends to one who has entered my life in a special way. He has guided me to know Jesus as my Savior and Lord, in whose hands is the ultimate power, victory and glory. To Gustaf Aulén: "I thank my God whenever I think of you; and every time I pray for you, I pray with joy, remembering how you have helped to spread the Good News....." (Phil. 1:3).

Philadelphia

Laetare Sunday, 1987

Joseph J. Anderlonis

INTRODUCTION

The figure of Gustaf Aulén stands inseparably bound to the historic presentation of Christ's redemptive work which has come to worldwide attention as the Christus Victor view of the atonement. These 1930 Olaus Petri lectures (Den kristna försoningstanken. Huvudtyper och brytningar. - Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement.) have affected twentieth century Christological discussion far more than Aulén could have predicted at the time. Aulén's primary purpose in his Uppsala presentation was to further the atonement debate along the lines proposed in his exposition. He himself stressed this avowed intention to the author of this present study during conversations with him in June and July, 1977, at Aulén's home in Lund. The dissertation undertaken here hopes to continue Aulén's explicit desire "to further the discussion."

Following Aulén's own framework in the Christus Victor book, this present treatment endeavors also to explore the genetic influences on Aulén's thinking and how his Christus Victor idea subsequently matured throughout his long and prodigiously productive career. A major aim of this dissertation therefore is to establish the fact that the Christus Victor theme expressed by Aulén in these Christological lectures remained substantially constant throughout his theological thinking and writing,

particularly after 1930. With this in mind, it is easy to see Christus Victor as an important theological book of our time; but more than that, it emerges as a distinct and consistent religious outlook with a theological function beyond the confines of a single book. This investigation seeks to demonstrate that Christus Victor, the book does not stand isolated from the Christus Victor theme throughout Aulén's theological undertakings.

In addition, the dissertation proposes to identify the nature and extent of whatever changes altered Aulén's original presentation. Quite different from his well-known colleague Anders Nygren, whose peers repeatedly mention Nygren's insistence on never changing a theological position, Aulén manifests a characteristic quality of not fearing to alter or modify his ideas. The various editions of his Den allmänneliga kristna tron (The Faith of the Christian Church) exemplify a keen sensitivity to new situations and problems. Always aware of varying circumstances, Aulén presents a theology ever vibrant, fresh and compelling; a theological "youthfulness" characterizes such an ability and eagerness to search out and to discover new dimensions without being shackled to what one has said or written previously. In so many ways, Aulén has demonstrated such a distinctive vitality that an observer can readily concur with the Archbishop of Canterbury who described him at a theological conference in 1967 as "a most promising young theologian." This factor carries particular

significance given the fact that Aulén's long life (1879-1977) and amazing capacity to continue creative work up until his death spanned the entire scope of twentieth century theology. While concentrating on Aulén's soteriology, this dissertation intends to highlight Aulén's theological vitality.

The study presented here bears the title, The Soteriology of Gustaf Aulén: The Origins, Development and Relevancy of the Christus Victor Atonement View. Developed in seven chapters, the thesis investigates Aulén's soteriological affirmation in Christus Victor of a "classic" atonement view, presenting the exposition itself, its main historical characters, the theological influences upon Aulén, and the various criticisms directed at his proposal over the years. Aulén's methodology represents an important facet of such a consideration.

As it progresses, this inquiry aims at going beyond the rather over-simplified form of the question: Is Aulén correct or not in his assertion of a "classic" view of the atonement? Aulén himself recognized the sharpness and audacity of his theological hypothesis, and that in such a sweeping affirmation, there are points necessarily drawn to an extreme for the sake of testing the proposition. The question actually revolves around the ultimate validity of the theological position and how Aulén utilizes his choice of evidence. Pursuing such a pattern, this dissertation endeavors to understand why Aulén makes his theological

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proposal, where he gets his methodology from, why certain ideas are stressed, and how he presents his case. An entire group of interrelated questions arises from such an inspection. One may discuss whether Aulén's position coheres historically and systematically with the integrality of the Christian faith. Can Aulén's bold assertion withstand incisive theological scrutiny in spite of the proposal's rough edges and extremes? In what sense has Aulén made a truly creative contribution to Christian soteriology in delineating positions more clearly than anyone before him? These and similar questions form the background structure for this present investigation.

Finally, one comes to what might be termed the theological "viability" of Aulén's Christus Victor idea. What role does this classic view serve for the "functioning" of Christian faith? Does this atonement idea have a genuine value superior to other presentations, and does such an enduring worth render it truly "classic"? Does Aulén's affirmation have the innate capacity to unite the historical dimension of Christianity with the present, everyday lives of believers? What, if anything, does Christus Victor say to Christians living in a world of conflict and struggle? To comprehend the whole scope of Aulén's Christus Victor theme one must look at these points of validity and viability. In some sense, this dissertation endeavors to address both these factors.

The first sections of this work intend to situate

Gustaf Aulén in the theological milieu of Sweden in the early decades of the twentieth century and to describe the effect this has on his theological production. Such a backdrop serves the important purpose of clarifying certain methodological stances common to Aulén and the theology of Lund. For instance, one cannot escape the feeling that the strong anti-metaphysical bias of the developing Swedish theology, as well as the up's and down's vis-à-vis Albrecht Ritschl and his followers, does indeed have some connection with a position that disdains all rationalistic and historicizing atonement theories. One may inquire further how this so-called Lundensian theology influences Aulén's Christology? What, if any, are the contributions of Aulén to Anders Nygren and Ragnar Bring, and vice versa? In what sense does motif-research, motivforskning, condition Aulén's atonement presentation? Chapter One of this study undertakes the task of viewing Aulén in his life and work as well as in his relationship to the Lundensian group.

Many commentators on Aulén refer to his connection with Nathan Söderblom and Einar Billing and the consequences of this link for Aulén's theology. Chapter Two of this dissertation seeks to penetrate more deeply this relationship and to explore the chief ideas of these two pioneering theologians as constituting a "foundational" influence for Aulén's Christus Victor proposal. While a general connection with Aulén is regularly mentioned, here we attempt to cite specific points of convergence. For

example, if Söderblom's dualism indicates a significant theological theme, what particular relationship exists between this religious dualism and Aulén's methodology? Is Söderblom's talk of "the living God" discernible in Aulén's presentation? If the concept of revelation emerges as a major topic in Söderblom's theology, what joins Söderblom's thought with Aulén's notions of the revelatory aspects of Christ's saving work? In the case of Einar Billing, what importance does Billing's dramatic-historical dimension have for Aulén? Can one observe that prominent features of Billing's Försoningen reappear significantly in Aulén's Christus Victor? Einar Billing's 1908 book on the atonement - almost a totally lost work in theological discussion - is considered at some length in this context. Alex E. Falk's unpublished dissertation on Billing and his translation of Billing's Försoningen done in April, 1951 in a certain way brought Billing's Christological concepts out from Sweden, but unfortunately the contribution remains fairly well unappreciated. Chapter Two therefore examines Aulén's relationship to Söderblom and Billing in more depth than usually is the case.

Gustaf Aulén's death in December, 1977 brought to a close his lengthy theological career. During that period of varied activity, Aulén modified, altered and yet maintained his earlier theological assertions. Chapter Three analyzes how the span of the decades influenced the original Christus Victor exposition. One notable help here is the 1979 in

memoriam Gustavi Aulén publication of Per Erik Persson entitled, The Relation Between History and Faith as a Problem in the Theology of Gustaf Aulén, which concisely charts a distinct change in Aulén's attitude toward the historical dimension. Likewise, Aulén's later writings such as Dramat och symbolerna (1965), Kristen gudstro i förändringens värld (1967), Jesus i nutida historisk forskning (1973), and even his book on Dag Hammarskjöld's Markings (1970), add a fullness to the Christus Victor view. In one sense, it is quite true that the Olaus Petri lectures marked only the beginning of an atonement presentation which developed over the next five decades. Chapter Three also evaluates the correlation between Aulén's atonement position and his ideas concerning gudsbild, the God-picture, particularly his 1927 book, Den kristna gudsbilden genom seklerna och i nutiden.

Aulén's Christus Victor publication depicts three major protagonists in the atonement discussion: Irenaeus, Anselm and Luther. Chapter Four of this study probes the soteriology of Irenaeus in Adversus Haereses. A whole series of questions ensues. Is the motif of struggle and conflict part of Irenaeus' recapitulatio concept? Is Aulén justified in declaring Irenaeus' work to be in line with the classic view? A principal source for our investigation is Gustaf Wingren who not only stands as a formidable Irenaeus scholar, but also as Aulén's fellow Lundensian and the successor to Anders Nygren. In Wingren's life-long study of

Irenaeus a special expertise, both professional and personal, is brought to an analysis of Aulén.

Without doubt, many of the principal objections to Aulén's Christus Victor theme focus on Aulén's portrayal of Anselm's atonement theology. Chapter Five assesses Anselm's Cur Deus Homo and how Anselm comes to his satisfaction scheme of atonement. The analysis then considers Aulén's critique of this satisfaction structure and the theological problematic which Aulén insists results from this so-called Latin type of atonement. In later years, Aulén clarified his respect for Anselm's intention, but, nonetheless, retained his aversion to all rationalistic atonement theories.

Influenced by his Swedish religious heritage, Gustaf Aulén sees in Martin Luther a return to the classic atonement position of the early Church. Chapter Six therefore bears the heading, "Luther and the Christus Victor Theme." Several important sections enable the reader to judge better Aulén's contention regarding Luther's atonement thinking. First, consideration is given to the twentieth century Luther renewal in Sweden which decisively affected Aulén's theology. Aulén himself provided a major impetus to this Luther rebirth. Similarly, the principal points of concurrence and disagreement concerning Aulén's Luther exposition are reviewed: In what ways has Aulén faithfully interpreted Luther or not? Finally, an investigation of Luther's own words, especially his Galatians (1535)

commentary, is included. All of this focuses attention on Aulén's soteriological proposal.

The final chapter of this dissertation provides a critique of Aulén's classic atonement idea and its theological relevancy. In Aulén's presentation there appears a theological richness which opens itself to a variety of other considerations - ecclesiological, moral, societal. Christus Victor not only speaks of a saving deed accomplished in Palestine centuries ago, but also of the continuity of that mission in the Church's Gospel message. It may well be that in the turmoil and fear-filled pessimism of the cruelest of human centuries, a renewed view of the triumph of Jesus conveys fresh hope for today. To further that discussion of Christ's victory and the promise for living contained therein characterizes the tribute this present study hopefully accords Gustaf Aulén.

Finally, what of the "newness" involved in this presentation? This emerges from the following: a) highlighting specific points of convergence in the influence of Billing and Söderblom on Aulén's soteriology; b) tracing the Christus Victor theme not just in the published Christus Victor, but throughout Aulén's subsequent writings up until the close of his career in December, 1977; c) evaluating in a renewed manner Aulén's use and interpretation of the three major characters - Irenaeus, Anselm and Luther - based upon the entire scope of his theological works especially in line with the clarifications appearing in some of Aulén's later

publications; d) establishing the point that Gustaf Aulén's theology after 1930 manifests a distinct Christus Victor theme throughout, and that therefore the Christus Victor book should not be isolated from the rest of Aulén's thinking.

In any work of this type, there exists a necessary limitation, because of both the author's intention and the vast quantity of material allied to the investigation. The limitations here concern the following: a) no major evaluation of the subjective atonement view is presented (Aulén likewise does not provide this in the published Christus Victor); b) the consideration attempts no exhaustive study of Irenaeus, Anselm and Luther in themselves, but follows them closely in those particular areas where their theology pertains to Aulén's own choice of texts, figures, images, principles, etc.; c) no attempt is made to go beyond the pattern Aulén himself employs in the Christus Victor book; d) the study of other Patristic sources, besides Irenaeus, as well as a comprehensive scriptural analysis, is not provided due to the obvious necessary limitations; e) no major extensive comparison with contemporary theologians is undertaken, even though they form part of the inclusive discussion. Many of these aforesaid areas demand a special presentation in themselves. These limitations, however, do not hinder the central purpose of this dissertation: expounding and evaluating Aulén's soteriological proposal in light of additional

material. It is hoped that this exposition can achieve this intention successfully, and hence, contribute to a revived interest in Aulén's bold and enduring soteriological proposition - that of Christ as Victor.

CHAPTER ONE: Gustaf Aulén and the Theology of Lund

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CHAPTER ONE: Gustaf Aulén and the Theology of Lund

A. The Beginnings

On 16 December 1977, Gustaf Aulén, the retired Bishop of Strängnäs, died. This ended a truly remarkable life and career for this theologian and churchman; in many ways, it was a lifetime of work and faith-service unparalleled in our own century. Gustaf Emanuel Hildebrand Aulén was born on May 15, 1879 to Johan Aulén and Maria Hildebrand in the town of Ljungby where his father was the local pastor. The father supplied the basics of early education for Gustaf and his two sisters, Gertrude and Elizabeth. Maria Hildebrand, the kind and gentle mother, provided the first introduction to music for her children. Aulén's life-long love for music stretches its roots back to these happy childhood years. The towns of Ljungby, Voxtorp, Mortorp and Gärdslösa, where the elder Aulén served as pastor, are the places of the future theologian's earliest days. Throughout his life, Aulén maintained a special affection for his native region in southeastern Sweden - the Baltic island of Öland and the province of Kalmar.

In his memorial publication for Aulén, Birger Gerhardsson reminds us that Aulén liked to divide history into periods and remarkably his own long life of 98 years can be outlined likewise:

- a. 17 years at home and at grammar school in Kalmar (1879-1896);

- b. 17 years as a student and young graduate in Uppsala (1896-1913);
- c. 20 years as professor at the University of Lund (1914-1933);
- d. 20 years as bishop in the diocese of Strängnäs (1933-1952);
- e. 25 years as emeritus in Lund (1952-1977).¹

In 1896, the young man Aulén matriculated as an undergraduate at the University of Uppsala. Gerhardsson describes the student as happily concerned with many interests and, at the same time, securing for himself a solid education.² Having passed the Divinity licentiate in 1906, Aulén presented his docent's dissertation in 1907; he then became for three years docent (associate professor, research assistant and lecturer) under Nathan Söderblom in Theological Encyclopedics, the forerunner of Comparative Religion.³ Following this, the young docent fulfilled the same role for Einar Billing in Dogmatics.⁴ This period of association with the notable figures of Söderblom and Billing at Uppsala emerges as a crucial factor in analyzing and interpreting the theological production of the mature Aulén.⁵ During his tenure at Uppsala, he met and married Kristine Björnstad.

A new stage in Aulén's life commenced with his move to the University of Lund in 1913. Lund, located in the region of Skåne in the very south of Sweden near to Denmark, was destined to become a major working ground for a significant renewal in Swedish theology. In this setting, the fruitful cooperation and collaboration associated with Aulén, Anders

Nygren, Ragnar Bring and others would issue forth as "Lundensian theology." Gustaf Aulén's theological legacy cannot be appreciated properly unless one views it in the light of the theological renewal at Lund.

B. Swedish Historical Background 1. The Reformation

To understand the theological revival of Lund in the 1920's and 1930's, one needs to step back in time to consider the historical development of the Church in Sweden. Sweden initially received the Christian faith in the ninth century when the Benedictine, St. Ansgar (801-865) established the first Christian community on the island of Björkö. His mission, soon to be jeopardized, was finally completed by English and Frankish missionaries in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Lund achieved the status of an archdiocese in 1103, and Uppsala, in 1164. Both historic towns became centers of learning with their respective universities; Uppsala founded in 1477 and Lund, in 1668.

The Reformation period in Sweden reflects the fact of Rome's neglect for the concerns of these far northern areas as well as the Papacy's support for Danish supremacy over Swedish lands. A union of the Scandinavian kingdoms had been effected at Kalmar in 1397. The Danish kings, however, sought continually to increase their power and adopted a policy of generous treatment for the Church in Sweden to aid in their pursuit. Gustavus Vasa led the rebellious Swedes

to victory against the Danish king and assumed the role of Swedish king in June, 1523. A consolidation of Vasa's position ensued, during which the power of the Roman Church in Sweden shrank considerably. The question of appointment of bishops produced a confrontation between the new king and the Pope; and since both sides remained firm, 1523 marks the year of formal severance from Rome. Into this situation, the Reformation movement entered Sweden principally through the figure of Olaus Petri (1493-1552), former student of Luther in Wittenberg. Vasa provided the political impetus for a change of ecclesiastical authority in Sweden; Petri brought to Sweden the spiritual transformation of Reformation thought. Conrad Bergendoff describes the situation of the 1520's in Sweden:

Thus in a decade, Sweden had undergone a transformation of overwhelming significance. At the beginning of this period the nobility had been weak, and the ruler a foreigner, while the Church was strong and independent. At the close, a native king had laid strong foundations for a new dynasty, and attained supreme power in the kingdom. The nobility had been increased and enriched. The Church, on the contrary, had been sundered from Rome, its allegiance transferred to the king, its bishops and archbishop made subservient to the Crown, its wealth confiscated. Even the foundation of the Church had been redefined, and its goal made evangelical. Before England had broken with Rome, while Denmark and Norway were still struggling with strong Roman hierarchical parties, while the fate of Germany was still undecided, and Calvinism was but in the making, Sweden had, through its leaders, pledged itself to an evangelical Church within an independent State.⁶

Political independence and Reformation thought fused together to form the pattern of the Swedish Church. This

bond became complete in the official adoption of the Confessio Augustana in 1593. Missing from this picture were the scenes of bloody civil war as in Germany; nonetheless, a genuinely evangelical Church had emerged in the midst of political confrontations. Freed from traumatic upheaval, Sweden's evangelical Church retained much continuity in doctrine and in liturgical practice with its former situation. The general policy of Petri and of his brother, Laurentius (Archbishop of Uppsala, 1531-1573) was to establish Reformation doctrine and renovation in line with past tradition. This historical fact places the Church of Sweden in a unique ecumenical position. Walter M. Horton details this continuation:

Lutheran in theology, the Church of Sweden passed through the Reformation without any disturbance of that "apostolic succession" so dear to the hearts of Catholics. Her Catholic bishops simply elected to renounce allegiance to Rome, and teach the "evangelical" interpretation of the Christian faith. When such a church, in the person of its Archbishop, takes up the cudgels for the truth in Protestantism, it gains a hearing among high churchmen of East and West such as is accorded to none of the other Protestant churches. It might be fairly claimed that the Church of Sweden, since Söderblom, has begun to supersede the Church of England as the real "bridge church" between Catholicism and Protestantism.

Horton's remarks here, while directed specifically to the role of Nathan Söderblom as an ecumenical pioneer, are certainly apropos to the Swedish Church as a Church of continuity.

B. Swedish Historical Background 2. Late 19th Century

The theology of nineteenth century Sweden conveys to the observer its dependence upon Hegel, Schleiermacher, and especially Kant. Whether one views the situation at Uppsala or at Lund, the two great university centers, this stands out clearly. Thor Hall, in his publication on Ragnar Bring, A Framework for Faith, reviews the possibilities of Kantian interpretation that have bearing on the future Lundensian methodology.⁸ First, one accepts the Kantian premises and then proceeds somewhat freely. This appears in the case of the German theologians, Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889) and Wilhelm Herrmann (1846-1922). A second way is in the acceptance and widening of Kant's a priori to include not just theoretical and practical reason but also a unique religious a priori; Friedrich Schleiermacher exemplifies this category. And a third possibility consists in rejecting the Kantian proposals without reservation; hence, Hegelianism finds its base outside of the religious connection with human reason. Of these three avenues dealing with Kantian interpretation, the future Lundensian methodology moved in sympathy with the second approach.⁹ Over and above that, it rejected any notion of metaphysics and consequently, developed in contrast to the traditional Hegelian method. The theological methodology of the Lundensian school drew from Kant and Schleiermacher its critical philosophical strength; from Ritschl and the

Ritschlian line, however, a concern with historical criticism and Luther research.

In reviewing the theological and philosophical situation of the two great Universities of Uppsala and Lund, one observes that then, as later, they were characterized by a "friendly antagonism."¹⁰ During the nineteenth century Lund contained within itself a variety of philosophical and theological attitudes. Thor Hall describes this scene:

Methodologically, the Lundensian scales have swung from the express Kantian commitments of the leader of the so-called "reform faculty" Martin Eric Ahlman, to the Hegelianism of the leaders of the so-called "great faculty" in the middle of the nineteenth century, among them E.G. Bring, and back again to the modified Kantianism of the modern Lundensians.¹¹

Looking at Lund, therefore, one recognizes varying degrees of commitment to Kantian principles. Such a linkage remains evident in the ever-present philosophical and methodological pre-occupation of the Lundensians. While Nygren and Bring have expended much effort on such methodological pursuits, Gustaf Aulén's thinking has concentrated more on the historical aspects of doctrinal presentation and content.

In addition to the Kantian question, nineteenth century Uppsala found itself strongly affected by the idealistic personalism of the philosopher, Christopher Jakob Boström (1797-1866). While the sympathies of certain dominant theologians might have been consistent with Hegelianism as correlated with a "commitment to Lutheran Orthodoxy and a traditional Swedish high Church ecclesiology," nevertheless, a certain Boströmian influence

increased.¹² The practical nature of some nineteenth century Lundensians, whose theology concerned itself with the realities of "God, Church and nation," found this influence more suitable and "opened the door for a fuller theological-philosophical conjunction than the traditional Hegelian speculation had."¹³ Nineteenth century Sweden, therefore, manifested a variety of philosophical influences.¹⁴

Concerning religious matters, Lutheran Orthodoxy prevailed as the principal mode of doctrinal interpretation. The chief ecclesiological struggle concerned the ever-intensifying debate regarding the national Church of Sweden with its Lutheran confessional stance and those opposed to its privileged status. A motion of the Swedish Parliament in 1889 had proposed that the Book of Concord and Luther's Small Catechism be stricken from the creedal confession of the Swedish Church. In 1893, this proposal was defeated by only a narrow margin; the evangelical nature of the Swedish Church had been maintained.

On the Continent, the second half of the century witnessed the emergence of the theology of Albrecht Ritschl. Ritschl's influence quickly affected the theologians in Sweden; their brand of "Ritschlianism," however, developed along its own lines. Pehr Eklund and Magnus Pfannenstill, the predecessors of Aulén and Nygren at Lund, absorbed certain Ritschlian tendencies.¹⁵ Nathan Söderblom and Einar Billing, two extremely important formative figures for

Swedish theology, likewise, were touched by Ritschl's renewal - even if indirectly through such figures as Wilhelm Herrmann.¹⁶

What was the influence of Albrecht Ritschl? In his book on Ritschl, David W. Lotz gives an insightful appraisal of Ritschl's theological perspectives.¹⁷ Ritschl attempts to understand the original Luther; he is quite concerned about the praktische Grundgedanken, the "practical root ideas" of the young Luther.¹⁸ He affirms that the true meaning of the Reformer is to be discovered here, and not in the later corruptions of Lutheran followers. The 1515-1520 writings of Luther hold the critical position for a valid interpretation of the Reformer's thought. Ritschl examines the formation and deformation of Luther's ideas, and then attempts to effect a re-formation accordingly. Stressing the importance of a religious self-understanding and a religious Church understanding, Ritschl enunciates the Reformation cornerstone principle of assurance of justification by faith.¹⁹ Lutheran Orthodoxy, Pietism, and Schleiermacher together have contributed to the deformation of these principles.²⁰ All of this, Ritschl relates to the Christian's posture in regard to the world. Hence, there arises in his thinking a "practical telic-correlate" of justification by faith; this correlate issues forth as a moral and ethical concern for the kingdom of God and for fidelity in one's earthly vocation.²¹ It is a "telic impulse" directed toward the moral construction of society.

Even though Ritschl's Lutherbild is put together narrowly, his impetus to a renewal of Luther-thinking vitally affected the future Lundensian course. However, Lotz's comment on Ritschl pinpoints a significant difficulty: "In brief, Ritschl was finally more intent on 'placing' Luther in his doctrinal system than on 'hearing' Luther on Luther's own terms."²²

Ritschl's significance for Swedish theology as it entered upon the twentieth century consisted of these notable points:

a. the thesis that religious propositions are statements of value judgment concerned with religious meaning or the experience of salvation, and not functioning as metaphysical statements;

b. the explicit rejection of the juridical interpretation of God and the emphasis on love as the essence of the Christian God-concept;

c. the experience of Christian life in the context of vocation.²³

All of these - distrust of metaphysics, a renewed interpretation of the concept of God, and the importance of one's vocation - characterize much of the Lundensian approach. Similarly, Ritschl's concern for a correct understanding of Martin Luther prepared the way for the Luther research so crucial to Swedish theology.

C. The Formation of the Lundensian Group

At the turn of the century, the University of Lund numbered among its faculty members the charming, articulate and approachable Pehr Eklund (d. 1911). Hall refers to Aulén's evaluation of Eklund in this fashion: "...his colleagues generally regarded him the incarnation of the Lundensian scholar: the articulate, humorous, wide-ranging intellectual who is distinctive and recognizable in all that he does and says."²⁴ In a major work, Den apostoliska tron i Martin Luthers katekesutläggning (1897-99), Eklund focused attention on the essence of evangelical Christianity, the faith which expresses itself as an attitude of trust in God.²⁵ In Eklund, the Luther interest, so characteristic of later developments at Lund, provided the basis for his theological reflections. Searching for the "purely evangelical," Eklund described three varying distortions of the evangelical faith position:

1. the scholastic - orthodox - legalistic;
2. the intellectualistic - rationalistic - theoretical;
3. the emotionalistic - pietistic - mystical.²⁶

This kind of categorization and schematization finds wide use in the Lundensian group despite its inherent danger of oversimplification.²⁷ Utilizing Ritschlian ideas and terminology, the popular Eklund attempted to harmonize historical-critical Luther studies with the Lutheran

orthodoxy of the late nineteenth century.²⁸ Gustaf Aulén succeeded to Eklund's chair in Dogmatics at Lund in 1913.

To the north, two important theologians commenced their teaching and professorial activities at Uppsala, Nathan Söderblom and Einar Billing. Söderblom initiated his Uppsala career in 1901; Billing entered upon his position in 1908. At Uppsala, Gustaf Aulén held the position of docent under both Söderblom and Billing; and the two men featured prominently in Aulén's theological maturity. Their far-reaching contributions for Lundensian thought included a variety of theological insights. In summary, Söderblom and Billing provided two essential foci for the Lundensian presentation: a religious dualism and a dynamic-dramatic view of history. Although both Söderblom and Billing stand apart from and precede the Lundensian group, their work constituted a foundational base for that of Aulén, Nygren and Bring. When Aulén left Uppsala in 1913 to take up his position as Eklund's successor in Lund, he carried with him the enriching influences of these two notable individuals. Aulén's development of a suitable theological method, as well as that of the other Lundensians, depended heavily on the initial contributions of these two Uppsala giants. Their theological initiative and creativity signaled the beginning of a new era in Swedish religious thinking.

Aulén's move from Uppsala to Lund set the stage for the development of a unique, theological approach at Lund. Two other prominent theologians completed the foundation of

this movement, Anders Nygren and Ragnar Bring.

D. Anders Nygren

Anders Theodor Samuel Nygren was born in Göteborg, Sweden, on November 15, 1890. His father Samuel held degrees in philosophy and theology received in the 1860's while the so-called "Great Faculty" of the mid-century dominated the scene at Lund. In his "Intellectual Biography", Nygren describes his father's influence upon him in regard to learning and to devotion to the Church.²⁹ Nygren likewise relates an early concern for philosophical and methodological pursuits in describing the discovery of J.E. Erdmann's Filosofiska Miniaturer in his father's library.³⁰ This keen interest intensified as the young Nygren entered upon his studies at the University of Lund. Absorption in Scripture, especially the New Testament, in systematic theology and in the philosophy of religion characterized the eager student. It was the latter that would engage great attention in his post-graduate career. Nygren's impulse in the direction of the philosophy of religion received enthusiastic support from a young docent at Lund, Torgny Segerstedt, the later staunch opponent of Nazism. Nygren conveyed some dissatisfaction with Segerstedt's advice:

He then advised me most strongly against systematic theology, saying that what was of value in systematics could be much better derived from philosophy of religion, as this was the scientific

form of systematic studies, with dogmatics and ethics as its unscientific counterpart. This did not accord at all with what I had come to understand by either philosophy of religion or systematic theology. A philosophy of religion which tries to take over the task of systematic theology is a travesty. It can have this purpose if and only if it is to be a metaphysical philosophy of religion, and if it is metaphysical, it thereby becomes unscientific.³¹

Already in these student days, Nygren set for himself the goal of developing a purely scientific, non-metaphysical philosophy of religion as well as laying a scientific basis for dogmatics and ethical theology.³² Methodologically this attempt at a critical scientific basis for religious thought freed from metaphysics is an essential characteristic of Lundensian theology.

In preparing his doctoral dissertation, Religiöst a priori, dess filosofiska förutsättningar och teologiska konsekvenser (The Religious a priori, Its Philosophical Basis and Theological Implications), Nygren journeyed to Germany to discuss his project with Ernst Troeltsch and Rudolf Otto, both of whom possessed expertise in the field. Nygren's purpose was to develop a non-metaphysical, critical-analytical approach to the definition of the religious category of experience.³³ The faculty at Lund accepted the dissertation in 1921, and Nygren immediately became docent under Magnus Pfannenstill, Aulén's colleague. In 1924, Nygren became Aulén's full-time partner as professor of systematic theology. Fulfilling this new role, Nygren came to forge a close relationship with Ragnar Bring, a student from Uppsala who had come to Lund. Through Bring,

Nygren was introduced to the philosophy prevalent at Uppsala. Later, upon Aulén's appointment as bishop, Bring and Nygren shared professorial positions at Lund. Nygren recalled his personal and professional closeness to these two gifted colleagues:

Even at that first meeting I had been struck by the openness and generosity which were characteristic of Gustaf Aulén's thought, and which now as his closest colleague I was able to enjoy. There is no doubt at all that the cooperation that then began was something quite unique. I can never be too grateful that for the first ten years of my professorship I had Gustaf Aulén beside me. Nor am I any less grateful that when he gave up his professorship to become Bishop of Strängnäs, his successor was Ragnar Bring, with whom the same spirit of cooperation continued down the years. He and I had become acquainted quite early on when, after finishing his basic studies in philosophy at Uppsala, he came to study theology at Lund. Through him I gained many insights into the Uppsala philosophy.³⁴

Varying types of Hegelianism dominated the Swedish philosophical scene during the nineteenth century. The philosopher J.J. Borelius in his classical Hegelian views and C. J. Boström with his more personalistic idealism stand as the two principal philosophical figures. Boström was influential not only in Uppsala where he taught, but also at Lund where the more conservative stance of Borelius' metaphysics gave way to Boström's personalism.³⁵ The latter appeared more suitable to the particular ecclesiastical concerns of the time.³⁶ With the advent of the twentieth century, the philosophical position altered in the direction of philosophical criticism. Axel Hägerström (1868-1939) and Adolf Phalén (1884-1931) emerged as the chief philosophical

proponents; and their neo-Kantian philosophical outlook veered strongly in the direction of criticism and positivism, leaving behind the idealism and metaphysical emphases of Hegelianism. The "new" philosophy dealt harshly with idealism and metaphysics. Such views as these, which influenced Ragnar Bring, affected Nygren's already sturdy criticism of metaphysics in seeking for a valid, scientifically-based philosophy of religion.

The question became increasingly clearer: how can religion be scientifically valid without resort to metaphysics? This scientific concern (vetenskap, vetenskaplig) must exclude all that is narrow, irrational, devoid of meaning. When concerned with theology, the Lundensians face a certain content of faith to handle. Can this be accomplished without metaphysics in a truly scientific fashion? Thor Hall clearly illustrates the situation: "In short, Lundensian theology aimed at a double distinction: It desired at one and the same time to be both intellectually respectable and theologically responsible. It aspired to be both truly scientific and fully evangelical."³⁷ Certainly, this way of thinking presented a methodological format; above that, the format was directed to handling a specific, religious content.

Nygren criticized Kant's attempted reduction of religion to a confining ethics but found that Schleiermacher had applied the Kantian process without jeopardizing the uniqueness of the religious category.³⁸ In his doctoral

work, Nygren took up this problematic of the unique, religious a priori. According to Nygren, two requirements were necessary if theology was to be a valid source of human understanding: 1. it must first have its own subject matter for investigation and not be parasitic on some other discipline; 2. it must employ a scientific method of study which is appropriate to its subject matter.³⁹ While the philosophical position of Hägerström and Phalén at Uppsala brought elemental tools to the method of Nygren and the other Lundensians, one quickly discerns that the dependence on the critical positivism of these Uppsala philosophers provided method-format rather than result. Hägerström and Phalén themselves stood in opposition to religious reality; their concept of experience was material, rational and logical, excluding the religious.⁴⁰ Nygren's major concerns in these early years appear in his chief publications: Religiöst a priori (1921); Dogmatikens vetenskapliga grundläggning med särskild hänsyn till den Kant-Schleiermacherska problemställningen (The Scientific Foundation of Dogmatics) (1922); Filosofisk och kristen etik (Philosophical and Christian Ethics) (1923); Etiska grundfrågor (Basic Questions in Ethics) (1926); Religiositet och kristendom (Religiosity and Christianity) (1926).

Nygren's analysis identifies four questions - the theoretical, the ethical, the aesthetic and the religious - each of these expressing a distinct area of meaning - science, ethics, art and religion. Each possesses its

unique and distinct qualities and meaning. Nygren's position spotlights the fact that religion is an independent form of experience with its own context of meaning; therefore, religious assertions must be handled in their own unique ambient.⁴¹

These methodological questions expressed by Nygren can be recognized in much of Gustaf Aulén's theological exposition. In his theological compendium, Den allmänneliga kristna tron (The Faith of the Christian Church), Aulén insists that "the greatest possible objectivity" must be sought after in theological exploration; the approach must be "purely scientific and objective."⁴² Aulén understands that "systematic theology deals in the content and meaning of the Christian faith."⁴³ To explore the faith-relationship between man and God and such questions as the atonement, the theological task must intend "nothing else than to allow the motifs and viewpoints of faith itself to appear in their rightful place, and...to understand faith from within."⁴⁴ True to this way of thinking, Aulén sees the theologian's role as focused on the investigation of the historical givenness of the Christian faith, bringing to light its characteristic affirmations and explicating their historical significance.⁴⁵

From this vantage point, Aulén proceeds to distinguish a genuine systematic theology from a rational metaphysics just as Nygren does.⁴⁶ While the scope of Aulén's theological work goes beyond the critical notions of

Nygren, this characteristic Lundensian rejection of metaphysics colors Aulén's innate distrust of the methodology exemplified in such subjects as the medieval approach to atonement.

Along with his methodological pursuits, Anders Nygren published the study which was destined to bring him universal attention, Den kristna kärlekstanken genom tiderna - Eros och Agape (History of the Christian Idea of Love - Agape and Eros), a treatise published in two parts (1930, 1936) and in various editions and translations. (The English edition appeared as Agape and Eros - 1932, 1939). Nygren describes agape as the fundamental "motif" of Christianity, contrasting it with two other key motifs - eros and nomos.⁴⁷ This "motif-searching," motivforskning and Nygren's presentation of agape stand as hallmark features of Lundensian thought. In motivforskning one seeks to discover the fundamental formative and essential elements of a religion or a religious movement by a critical examination of the historical evidence. The motif-search reaches for the meaning behind the terminology or form of expression and attempts to arrive at the affirmation that gave rise to the particular statement of doctrine.⁴⁸ The statement itself is determined by the thought-forms of the day and by the positions that it seeks to exclude, thereby possessing both a positive and negative function.⁴⁹ As the motif-search approaches the central, fundamental affirmation in a religious context, then it becomes a search for the

grundmotiv. It is this grundmotiv that pulls together all the varying dimensions of the religious movement. Nygren sees the grundmotiv as the fundamental answer to a fundamental question.⁵⁰ In his Agape and Eros, Nygren discusses the "nomos-motif" in Judaism, the "eros-motif" in Hellenism and the "agape-motif" of Christianity. Even though these motifs may not be found in a pure form in these religious areas, nevertheless, they are distinctive. The grundmotiv provides the basis for understanding the entire theological structure of the religious movement. For example, Gustaf Aulén in "Kristenhetens tre huvudbekännelser" ("Christianity's Three Chief Confessions") declares that the creedal confessions of the early Church concerning resurrection and Incarnation, as well as the Reformation confession of justification by faith, all affirm the same basic motif in spite of the different cultural and historical situations.⁵¹

Nygren's presentation does not abstract itself from testing the proposed hypothesis within the actual historical development. In order for a theological attempt at the understanding of a religion and its grundmotiv to maintain scientific validity, it must consider these matters from a religious viewpoint. This religious viewpoint emerges from "faith's own way of seeing" and precludes any intrusion by metaphysics or narrow confessional apologetics.⁵²

Theological research seeks neither to produce faith nor to provide a basis for faith but only to understand the content

and implications of faith.⁵³ Nygren sees the theological task as a study of the Christian faith from within its own categories; it demands a critical approach in order to keep it a validly scientific task.⁵⁴ In this endeavor, Nygren has employed the analytical tools of Kant and Schleiermacher:

From Kant he [Nygren] learned "the transcendental analytical method," or as Nygren preferred to describe it, "the logical analysis of presuppositions," and from Schleiermacher he learned to consider religion a distinctive form of experience, categorically different from theoretical knowledge, aesthetic taste, and ethical will.⁵⁵

Yet beyond this, Anders Nygren perceived the difference between his own directions and that of the two Germans. He remarks:

In the interests of clarity, it should be said that when in this context, I speak of the "Kant-Schleiermacher presentation of the problem," there is no question of adopting either Kant's position or Schleiermacher's. I strongly dissociate myself from both of them, and have demonstrated their untenability. It is a question only of taking up a quite definite, carefully delimited line of thought which could be made fruitful in the attempt to lay a scientific and methodologically valid foundation for philosophy and theology.⁵⁶

In his own statement, Nygren summarizes the goal of his methodological investigation: "All my work on problems of method has had this one end constantly in view: to lay down a solid basis for theology and philosophy and in both these fields to overcome the threat of the metaphysical and the arbitrary."⁵⁷

Concerning the motivforskning methodology critically

developed by Nygren and the Lundensians, Ragnar Bring comments on Aulén's employment of this process. In an article entitled "Die neuere schwedische Theologie," Bring indicates that motivforskning seeks to penetrate through the various expressive forms to the basic religious reality these forms convey.⁵⁸ Aulén shares this method in common with Nygren even though their investigations explore different theological subjects. Bring declares:

Und diese methodische Tendenz ist ihm [Aulén] immer wichtiger geworden. In der ganzen christlichen Ideengeschichte sucht er die hinter den Formeln liegenden Motive. Diese Tendenz stimmt zutreffend mit Nygrens oben behandeltem Programm, dass die systematische Theologie die Eigenart des Christentums, dessen "Wegen," dessen Zentrum zu untersuchen habe, überein.⁵⁹

Referring to Aulén's 1927 book on the picture of God in Christian history, Bring cites this as a good example that "nach Aulén und Nygren muss die Dogmatik sich mit der christlichen Ideengeschichte beschäftigen, um durch eine Analyse derselben das Wesen der entscheidenden christliche Motive zu finden und zu verstehen."⁶⁰

Aulén's methodological concerns, especially as related to Nygren, Bring, and the critical religious philosophy of Lund, form the basis for a short unpublished study by Bernhard Erling, "Faith and Theology According to Aulén."⁶¹ Analyzing the various editions of Aulén's The Faith of the Christian Church in Swedish and English, as well as later works, Erling reviews Aulén's position. He insists that throughout them Aulén retains the purely scientific character of systematic theology, distinguishing it sharply

from any form of metaphysics.⁶² Yet, according to Erling, Aulén's discussion tends to be general, and "the reader remains uncertain as to the relation of Aulén's theology to the theological methodology developed by Nygren and Bring."⁶³ Erling's statement can be misread easily; certainly, in the matter of the theological role and the rejection of rational metaphysics Aulén stands squarely with his colleagues at Lund.

Clarifying Nygren's theological/methodological principles and his utilization of motivforskning in describing agape, is it possible to summarize the characteristics of the Christian idea of love? How does this agape appear and how does it relate to God and his salvific-justifying work in Christ? Thor Hall summarizes Nygren's basic characteristics of agape:

1. agape is spontaneous and unmotivated;
2. agape is indifferent to value;
3. agape is creative of value;
4. agape establishes fellowship.⁶⁴

In the Christian's relationship with God, the dominant emphasis is on the theocentric character of this unity. This agape has no cause or foundation outside of God's nature, and the divine creates the creature's worth in face of all unworthiness. It remains a totally radical love centered in God himself. Nygren's views on agape appear in his essay on the atonement, Försoningen en Gudsgärning (1932).⁶⁵ His presentation conveys the strength of Nygren's

conviction: "Any theory of atonement which conflicts with the love of God, with God's agape, is from a Christian point of view to be condemned."⁶⁶ These thoughts emerge as vital contributions to the theology of Lund.

Nygren's essay on the atonement contains notable points of similarity to Aulén's Christus Victor publication and reflects the significant role accorded Luther by the Lundensians. Nygren insists that fellowship and reconciliation with God is impossible without atonement, and that atonement depends upon the self-sacrifice of love.⁶⁷ The dominant characteristic of this atonement is one of unmitigated and unchallenged theocentricity; herein, Nygren stands in direct line with Luther and Aulén. Nygren asserts:

Over against this the Christian view of atonement stands for the complete abolition of the common idea of atonement. No fellowship with God without atonement - that is true; only, atonement is not a work of man, but of God himself. No atonement without sacrifice - this principle, too, retains its validity in Christianity; only, it is not man who offers the sacrifice and not God who accepts it, but it is God who sacrifices himself in Christ. Christianity is not the demand for an atonement and reconciliation which man must effect so as to open the way for himself to fellowship with God. Christianity is the word of reconciliation, the message of how God has made a way for himself.⁶⁸

Nygren stresses the point that this renewed fellowship with God achieved in atonement is not the result of any compromise or "unspiritual bargaining" with God.⁶⁹ He insists that man must recognize the deep mystery and paradox inherent in the atonement which overturns and challenges all

human assumptions and preconceptions: "Fellowship with God on the basis of holiness - that has been the age-long dream of humanity; fellowship with God on the basis of sin - that is the new message of Christianity."⁷⁰ In this, Nygren affirms that there exists a fundamental difference in the two approaches to atonement/reconciliation, that of medieval "Catholicism" and "evangelical Christianity."⁷¹ Aulén alleges the same divergence in Luther's denial of human merits in the salvation scheme. In a like fashion, Nygren understands Luther's position:

That is why Luther can speak of the believer as simul justus et peccator, 'both righteous and a sinner.' Hence sola fides becomes the classical expression for fellowship with God on the basis of sin. In this way the theocentric conception of atonement and reconciliation at last gains full acceptance.⁷²

Nygren's atonement concept clearly underlines the idea that this redemptive relationship is beyond "rational calculation": "To reason it seems self-evident that God seeks fellowship only with the righteous. Christianity preaches the opposite - God seeks fellowship with the sinner."⁷³ For Nygren, Paul's statement in Romans 5:6-10 exhibits the classic expression of God's loving fellowship with the unrighteous.⁷⁴ In such a reconciliation, all egocentric characteristics must give way to an unchallenged theocentricity.

As Aulén's Christus Victor amply utilizes the motif of conflict and victory, so Nygren stresses his notion of selfless love, agape. For Nygren, this divine love holds

the key to understanding God's victory. Nygren's expressions convey the style common to such figures as Aulén, Billing and Söderblom as he endeavors to understand the tension inherent in the atonement problem:

What this tension means can be expressed negatively as follows: because of his love God cannot condemn, because of his holiness he cannot freely forgive. Atonement, however, furnishes the means of releasing this tension. In the atonement love triumphs over holiness, but in such a way that holiness also gets its due. In the atonement love has found a way to forgive which holiness can accept. God's holiness⁷⁵ demands atonement and God's love provides it.

It is important to recognize two significant features in Nygren's atonement presentation that cohere with Aulén's Christus Victor idea. First, the necessity of atonement is not found in an external factor but within the divine being itself.⁷⁶ Second, all attempts to oppose God's holiness and love are futile.⁷⁷ Nygren observes that the real conflict exists between sin and love - sin as selfishness and love as the opening to a divine fellowship.⁷⁸ He succinctly states: "Love is a will to fellowship."⁷⁹

Developing this consideration, Nygren demonstrates that this divine love is of such depth that it sacrifices itself even as a lost love (eine verlorene Liebe).⁸⁰ The author explains his affirmation:

Here we have the greatest sacrifice and the profoundest suffering of love, when it becomes lost love. But God's love does not come to an end, God does not cease loving, because his love is spurned and trampled on by human selfishness, so that it becomes quite literally outcast and lost.⁸¹

This statement conveys the victory of the cross of Christ:

"yet the love which does not cease to be love even when it is lost, is for that very reason the victory over all that stands against it."⁸² Nygren's climactic thought proclaims the crux triumphans.⁸³

Treating of atonement in this manner, Nygren's essay manifests his application of the agape idea to the redemption. It likewise demonstrates the affinity of Nygren's thinking to that of Aulén's soteriology.

Nygren's interest in the New Testament brought him to a fruitful collaboration with the biblical scholars Anton Fridrichsen (Uppsala), Johannes Lindblom and Hugo Odeberg (Lund) on a series of commentaries, Tolkning av Nya Testamentet. In 1943, he contributed to this series his Pauli brev till Romarna (Commentary on Romans). During the 1930's his appraisal of the rise of Nazism and its effect on the Church in Germany resulted in a ban on traveling and speaking in Germany. In 1948, Nygren succeeded to the office of Bishop of Lund. Throughout these years, his ecumenical involvements included the various conferences on Faith and Order (Lausanne, 1927; Edinburgh, 1937; Amsterdam, 1948; Lund, 1952; New Haven, 1957; St. Andrews, 1960). He retired as Bishop of Lund in 1959. Nygren's retirement years saw the publication of Meaning and Method. Prolegomena to a Scientific Philosophy of Religion and a Scientific Theology (1972). Nygren died in 1978.

Those familiar with Swedish thought are well aware of the openly harsh theological dispute between Nygren and his

successor at Lund, Gustaf Wingren. This historic challenge to Nygren's methodology appeared in Wingren's book, Teologiens metodfråga (1954), in public debate, and in a series of articles and responses in the Svensk teologisk kvartalskrift (Vol. 32, 1956).⁸⁴ Wingren's incisive critique not only brought to light certain essential weaknesses of Nygren's method, but it also called into serious question many of the presumptions that had evolved from the original Lundensian approach. In his Teologiens metodfråga (Theology in Conflict), Wingren surveys Barth, Bultmann, and Nygren. Wingren contends that "Nygren's method of motif research which is easy and manageable to employ, obscures to some extent the really difficult position of systematic theology...motif research as a theological method actually prevents systematic theology from stating its problem in its most radical form."⁸⁵ Wingren faults the method for its "formality" by which agape answers a formal question without really touching the question of man's guilt and servitude.⁸⁶ He demands a more proleptic view of the gospel dynamic as it faces the question of man's guilt.⁸⁷ In his critique, Wingren's attitude conveys a kerygmatic concern somewhat foreign to the methodology of the more philosophically-oriented Lundensians.⁸⁸

Commenting on this notable disagreement between the two theologians, Bernhard Erling observes that Aulén appears to distance himself somewhat from a stringent adherence to

Nygren's method. He attributes this to Aulén's sympathy for some of Wingren's views, especially Wingren's book, Skapelsen och lagen (Creation and Law).⁸⁹ Aulén's treatment of the "Law of the Creator" in his major works conveys an appreciation for a law concept that seems to go beyond Nygren's strict interpretation of the nomos and agape motifs. Erling comments: "While he [Aulén] has not joined Wingren in his almost complete rejection of Nygren's philosophy of religion, he does appear to agree to some aspects of Wingren's critique of the agape motif, particularly with respect to the relation of agape and nomos."⁹⁰

As Erling explains his contention concerning Aulén, the theme of struggle and victory is recognizable:

One basic way in which God is related to the world is through his law, which is not a rationally definable set of universal norms, but a twofold demand, universally implicit in all changing life situations, that chaos, ruin, and destruction be opposed and that work to further the care of nature in its totality and the growth and development of life in the world be advanced. This Aulén calls the law of creation, interpreting creation as ongoing and not limited to the past.⁹¹

Erling's evaluation indicates that in the Wingren-Nygren controversy, "Aulén is seeking a mediating position."⁹²

In the final analysis, there remains a definitive connection between Nygren's intention and method with the theological productivity of Aulén within the "Lundensian" school. Both men have influenced one another. Another figure emerges in that context, Aulén's own successor in his teaching chair at Lund, Ragnar Bring.

E. Ragnar Bring

Theological methodology exercises a dominant role for the Lundensian group. This functional unity of essential Christian faith-content with a procedural philosophical means of understanding characterized the developing theology of Lund from the second to the sixth decade of the twentieth century.⁹³ Ragnar Bring stands at the very center of these methodological endeavors.

Ragnar Anders Ebbe Bring was born on July 10, 1895 in Skara, Sweden. His father had achieved a doctorate in philosophy at Uppsala. Following his father, Bring also enrolled at Uppsala; and there he was influenced by the teachings of Axel Hägerström and Adolf Phalén, both of whom had strong feelings against a metaphysically-oriented theology. This critical philosophy directly questioned the traditional theological positions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Successfully completing his philosophical course, Bring moved to the University at Lund for his theological studies in 1919. The environment of Lund seemed more congenial to the aspiring student especially since here at the University, figures such as Aulén and his fellow professor, Magnus Pfannenstill, did not hesitate in meeting the intellectual demands of the times. As a theological candidate, Bring studied under Gustaf Aulén; and it was during this period that Anders Nygren became a faculty

member at Lund. A deep personal and scholarly friendship matured between Bring and Nygren. They shared in a particular way that solicitude for philosophical-theological method which was to have an enormous impact on Lundensian theology. In 1929, Ragnar Bring presented his doctoral dissertation, Dualismen hos Luther (Dualism in Luther); he then took up the position of docent at Lund under Gustaf Aulén. Eventually Bring succeeded to Aulén's professorial post in 1934 when Aulén moved on to become the Bishop of Strängnäs. Bring continued as professor until his retirement in 1962.

Bring's overriding concern revolves around methodological questions. Such major works as Till frågan om den systematiska teologiens uppgift (Concerning the question of the task of systematic theology) (1933); Förhållandet mellan tro och gärningar inom luthersk teologi (The relationship between faith and works in Lutheran theology) (1934); Teologi och religion (Theology and religion) (1937); Wie ist nicht-metaphysische Philosophie möglich? (How is non-metaphysical philosophy possible?) (1939-1940) illustrate Bring's contributions in this area. Other publications by Bring treat of Scripture studies and ecclesiological topics. Again and again, these theological productions pursue that twofold unity of Christian faith-content and method which attempts to establish theological understanding on a sound fundamental (non-metaphysical) basis and to preserve the authenticity of

evangelical Christianity. The goal is "how and in what sense Christian systematic theology can be made both positively Christian and strictly scientific."⁹⁴ In this task, Nygren is viewed as the "most original" of the Lundensians and Bring as the "more inclusive and complete methodologist."⁹⁵ Discussing the contributions of both men, Aulén remarks that they have attempted to formulate a formal religious category in human experience and that they have tried to keep theology free from speculative metaphysics.⁹⁶ Thor Hall maintains that Bring has extended Nygren in two noteworthy directions: the problems of elementary epistemology and the practical consequences of this for theology.⁹⁷

What are the consequences of Bring's methodological search and what effect can be foreseen in the full development of Lundensian thought? Bring insists that true systematic theology seeks for the variously joined major categorical elements of a historical religion as they are joined together (motivsammanhang) and issue forth in a principle of unity (grundmotiv).⁹⁸ Hence, motivforskning, as objective, scientific, and non-metaphysical, remains constitutive for valid theology. By rejecting a position which would favor a split in knowledge between reason and revelation, which split projects a special, unique, religious epistemological category apart from the objectivity of a particular religious type or material, with its key points of discovery (motivsammanhang and

grundmotiv), Bring separated himself from other Swedish thinkers.⁹⁹ The purpose of scientific theology is to investigate the historical expressions of faith - including their dogmatic formulations of its content - and to clarify their intentions; it identifies and analyzes the religious motif to which the various dogmas give expression.¹⁰⁰ Yet, this methodological analysis must not itself succumb to latent metaphysical generalizations which would compromise its objectivity and therefore affect its validity.

Bring is critical of Einar Billing's widening of his "dramatic perspective" so that the "dramatic perspective" subsumes all others in a pseudo-metaphysical fashion, as well as of Billing's tendency toward theology not just as descriptive-analytical but as having an evaluative-normative function also.¹⁰¹ While Bring respects Billing's contributions in exploring the "dramatic perspective" and its potential usefulness in theology, his criticism of Billing demonstrates emphatically Bring's desire to preserve Lundensian methodology as unsoiled by invalid tendencies and methods. Nor is Bring happy with a "psychologizing" of the theological task. He attempts to adhere to a strict objectivity.¹⁰² Bring is adamant in stressing that the two focal points, a historical one and a systematic one, be kept validly together.¹⁰³ Finally, he emphasizes the need to see the internal coherence within a religious perspective, the motivsammanhang, the manner in which all the ideas, forms, and motifs function in a unity.¹⁰⁴ It is not simply a

question of motif-seeking but of motif-integration.¹⁰⁵ The "posing of the question" (frågeställningar), the problematic for theology, searches out the fullest significance of categorical, historical expressions of faith with deep care to maintain scientific validity in a descriptive and non-normative role. Gustaf Aulén's own thinking appropriates this methodological position.¹⁰⁶

Bring's doctoral study, Dualismen hos Luther, manifests the influence of Söderblom and Billing in the author's utilization of the dramatic-dualistic perspectives. Here he attempts to show that Luther's theology contains a central concentration on the theocentric as opposed to all that depends upon the human for salvation.¹⁰⁷ A similar situation is evident in Förhållandet mellan tro och gärningar inom luthersk teologi (Relationship of faith and works in Lutheran theology) as Bring handles the duality here.¹⁰⁸

In recent years, Bring has fallen under criticism similar to that directed by Gustaf Wingren against Anders Nygren. Bring himself may be so intent on his theoretical-systematic efforts with the consequence that he does not have much to offer the contemporary Church and its believers. The methodology may have clarified, but that clarity lacks vital response and so remains formalistic.¹⁰⁹

Ragnar Bring's coming to Lund in 1919 completed the great Lundensian triumvirate of Aulén, Nygren and Bring.¹¹⁰ Methodological concerns are clearly visible in each of them

and yet the latter two dominate this aspect. In light of this, their thinking along the lines of grundmotiv and motivsammanhang, a concern for the scientific role of theology, their quest for what is genuinely Christian, and a special interest in Luther, all play an essential role in understanding the theology of Gustaf Aulén. These Lundensian years provided an atmosphere of interaction and mutual contribution between the three men and their colleagues. Aulén influenced them; he too had been affected by others such as Söderblom and Billing. In turn, Nygren and Bring left their distinctive marks upon Aulén's future direction. To appreciate fully the theological legacy of Gustaf Aulén, one needs to experience in some measure this unique and fruitful Lundensian fellowship.

F. The Theological Writings of Gustaf Aulén

In his vivid tribute to Aulén, Gustaf Aulén In Memoriam, Birger Gerhardsson, who had cooperated closely with Aulén in his last years, reflects that even though Gustaf Aulén is gone, his influence lives on in his theological contributions: "For a long time to come he will be talking to us in them, inspiring us and guiding us, with warmth, consideration, and wisdom, this incomparable man - vir incomparabilis."¹¹¹ The theological writings which constitute Gustaf Aulén's legacy reveal much about the man and his response to ideas, events and demanding situations.

These productions demonstrate Aulén's position in that extraordinary fraternity of Lundensians. He shared the insights and creativity of his colleagues, Nygren and Bring. And yet, he remained his own man and the emphases are not always the same. Anders Nygren and Ragnar Bring manifest a methodological precision and exactness in searching out philosophical and theological points. Aulén's scholarship respects and employs these important moments, but his own general movement displays the artistic broad sweep which attempts to grasp the total, overall picture. He thinks in wide categories; he attempts to recreate the expansive lines of various centuries and ages. In short, his theological approach displays a theologian of penetrating historical and artistic sensitivity. In this grand sweep of things, Aulén reminds us of Nathan Söderblom and Einar Billing, his mentors during the Uppsala days. Exemplifying a comprehensive grasp of ideas and events, he often crosses and bridges disciplines and studies (tvärvetenskap) such as the joining of systematics and exegetical studies in Jesus i nutida historisk forskning.¹¹² This "cross study" is evident in Aulén's works on the Church and on liturgical matters as well.

Gustaf Wingren reminds us of Aulén's keen interest in the history of dogma which expresses itself graphically in Aulén's descriptions of various periods in Christian history.¹¹³ His studies of gudsbilden and försoningen throughout his career are notable examples. This historical

emphasis forms a crucial part of Lundensian thought where the historical dimension is wedded to the systematic.

"Historico - systematics" it might be termed; and whereas at times, Nygren and Bring appear quite heavy on the systematic side, Aulén retains his clear historical bases. He falls closely in line with his Uppsala friends here, especially Einar Billing's method of historical investigation and penetration. Billing seeks to identify the historical data in the "long-course" development of a doctrine, or idea, throughout the centuries (längdsnitt); he then analyzes that historical manifestation at actual points and situations in history - a cross-section dissection of the object of study at a given moment (tvärrsnitt).¹¹⁴ Aulén's application of historical research partakes of this length and depth study method. All of this leads to a discovery and appreciation of the essential and constant religious elements. While Aulén's strong movement in the historical sphere signaled a dissatisfaction with the sterile theology of the nineteenth century, it moved markedly beyond the historicism of Albrecht Ritschl and his school.¹¹⁵ Historicism receives little support from Aulén or any of the true Lundensians. It is noteworthy, however, that Aulén seems not to appreciate fully the historical dimensions of the Christian message until the late stages of his writings.

Per Erik Persson, in his essay study of the relationship between history and faith in Aulén's thought,¹¹⁶ demonstrates Aulén's hesitancy in this regard

especially as a reaction to an invalid historicism. Persson follows Aulén's maturity along the line of a fuller historical appreciation by analyzing the various editions and modifications in the six Swedish and several foreign publications of Den allmänneliga kristna tron in the treatment of faith and history.¹¹⁷ The author sees a definite, marked shift, not in any one single work, but beginning with Aulén's publications in the 1960's, particularly Reformation och katolicitet (1959).¹¹⁸ This fuller regard for history intensifies in Aulén's later works such as Dramat och symbolerna (1965), Kristen gudstro i förändringens värld (1967), and Jesus i nutida historisk forskning (1973).¹¹⁹ Aulén's growing appreciation for the depth of historical meaning relates integrally to the full development of his presentation regarding Christ's salvific role.

As a theologian with foundations in the Uppsala tradition of Söderblom and Billing, Aulén emerges with this keen historical sense; as immersed in the renewal of Swedish theology in the first decades of the twentieth century and influenced by the Lundensian critical methodology, he stands opposed to all narrow confessionalism and to any type of dogmatism and speculative metaphysics in searching for the essential and uniquely Christian faith. His dogmatic studies, especially Den allmänneliga kristna tron, illustrate this. For Aulén, as for his Lundensian colleagues, it is an ever-expanding quest for the essential,

permanent element in Christianity (bestående) characterized in a variety of forms (motifs) throughout human history. These various motifs are part of the real human situation in a sinful yet redeemed world; hence, one encounters the drama and the conflict of opposing forces. A dualistic-antagonistic religious viewpoint stands as a necessary means of comprehending the ultimate religious truth. Aulén's religious-historical search for truth leads inevitably to a seeking for unity in the midst of real tension and paradox. His Christus Victor presentation aptly represents this dualistic-antagonistic drama.

A further qualitative point of Aulén's long theological career cannot be missed. It is simply, as Gerhardsson notes, that he never feared to change, to redirect his positions; Gerhardsson suggests that his writings on atonement, on the picture of God, and his Den allmänneliga kristna tron are good examples of this.¹²⁰ Hence, Aulén's theology is never a finished product; it is always moving, developing, maturing.

Two complete bibliographies listing the many published works of Aulén have appeared, one in 1959 and the second in 1979.¹²¹ One quickly notices Aulén's vast interests in systematic theology, Church issues, music, and liturgical matters comprising 828 entries. Many items are articles from the Svensk teologisk kvartalskrift of which he was a founder (1925) and chief editor.¹²² Other citations reflect his concern for the liturgical renewal in Swedish worship.

A recent study by Carl-Gustaf Andrén explores Aulén's interest in liturgisk förnyelse, liturgical renewal.¹²³ The World War II years display his uncompromising opposition to Nazism, particularly in his interviews and discourses on law and justice. His ecumenical dimension and his affection for his own Swedish Church and its roots in Martin Luther as a doctor universalis ecclesiae hold a distinctly prominent place. Musical compositions and commentaries, likewise, tell us much about the ever-vital spirit of Gustaf Aulén. His last theological items in 1979 are meditations concerning the Holy Spirit. The works dealing with the picture of God and role of Christ found a touching and deeply spiritual seal of a life-time love in Andens vind över världen, the Spirit's movement in the world.¹²⁴

Aulén's first major published work was his doctoral dissertation, H. Reuterdahls teologiska åskådning med särskild hänsyn till Schleiermacher (1907), exploring the life and contributions of Henrik Reuterdahl, a nineteenth-century professor of ecclesiastical history at Lund. In 1912, he authored a study on the Lutheran idea of the Church, Till belysning af den lutherska kyrkoidén, dess historia och dess värde. He presented his inaugural lecture as a new faculty member at Lund in 1914 on the dogmatic traditions of that university entitled Den dogmatiska traditionen vid Lunds universitet. Fulfilling teaching needs, Aulén published his Dogmhistoria in 1917. His major treatise on the Christian faith, Den allmänneliga kristna

tron was first published in Swedish in 1923; a total of six Swedish editions appeared (1923, 1924, 1931, 1943, 1957 and 1965). Three English language editions were published (1948, 1960, 1973). This significant work of Aulén was quickly translated into Dutch (1927) and later into such diverse languages as Chinese (1955) and Portuguese (1965). In 1927, he authored his study on the Christian picture of God, Den kristna gudsbilden genom seklerna och i nutiden, translated into Dutch, Het christelijk godsbeeld (1929), and into German as Das christliche Gottesbild in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart (1930). The famous Olaus Petri lectures on atonement were delivered at Uppsala in Spring, 1930 and published in Swedish as Den kristna försoningstanken in 1931; they were translated into English under the title Christus Victor. (Dutch, 1931; French, 1943; Chinese, 1951). The English edition appeared reprinted in 1934, 1937, 1940, 1945, 1950, 1953, 1960, 1961, 1965 and 1970. The Hewett Lectures given by Aulén during his visit to the United States were published as Church, Law and Society (1947) and exhibit much of his thinking on the "Law of the Creator" as the basis for justice and peace. Coming as they did shortly after the war, these lectures summarize much of Aulén's intense wartime opposition to Nazism. Aulén's views convey his insistence on a moral responsibility based upon a developing appreciation for God's creative activity and the role of law in Christian belief. In 1942, En bok om kyrkan appeared as a result of the collaboration of various

theologians at Uppsala and Lund.

In 1952, Aulén retired from his post as Bishop of Strängnäs. These retirement years saw the publication of the following chief works: Hundra års svensk kyrkodebatt (1953); För eder utgiven (1956); (English edition: Eucharist and Sacrifice, 1958); Reformation och katolicitet (1959) (English edition: Reformation and Catholicity, 1961); Högmässans förnyelse liturgiskt och kyrkomusikaliskt (1961); Dag Hammarskjöld's White Book: An Analysis of Markings (1969). In his productive retirement at Lund, Aulén completed three noteworthy theological works that confirmed his still energetic vitality and incisive thinking: Dramat och symbolerna (1965) (Finnish, 1967; German, 1968; English, 1970); Kristen gudstro i förändringens värld (1967); and Jesus i nutida historisk forskning (1973) (Danish, 1975; English, 1976).¹²⁵ His personal reminiscences, Från mina 96 år appeared in 1975.

CHAPTER TWO: Foundations of the Christus Victor View of
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CHAPTER TWO: Foundations of the Christus Victor View of Atonement - The "Twin Pillars": Nathan Söderblom and Einar Billing

A. Nathan Söderblom: New Directions in Theology

Gustaf Aulén first brought his special interpretation of the "classic" view of Christ's salvific work to world attention in the 1930 Olaus Petri lectures at Uppsala. Certain philosophical stances and attitudes toward the purpose and function of the theological task exercised a significant influence on Aulén's presentation and its development in later decades. Hence, for a comprehensive attempt at understanding Aulén's position and its future directions, one cannot neglect the thinkers that bring to full flourish the so-named "Lundensian" theology - Anders Nygren and Ragnar Bring. The previous chapter has reviewed this connection. And yet one is drawn to a fitting question: if these figures mark the philosophical and theological attitudes which convey and further much of the Lundensian methodology, what of other influences upon Aulén and his subsequent soteriological exposition, prior to the emergence of the Lundensian theology? If Aulén, Nygren and Bring constitute the height of the Lundensian method and presentation, what of foundational influences on these figures themselves? What must be said about Swedish theology in the early decades of the twentieth century? As a response to these valid questions and for a foundational comprehension of Aulén's presentation of the Christus Victor soteriology, two names dominate: Nathan Söderblom and Einar

Billing. These two Swedes stand as "the twin pillars that form the gateway into this fruitful era," in that they "raised crucial questions and set the pattern and direction for subsequent theological research."¹

Nels F.S. Ferré in his investigation of Swedish theology reflects that a turn-around at the beginning of this century produced in the Lundensians, "one of the most constructive systems of theology, an effective synthesis of conservative and liberal fundamentals...."² Ferré comments further that a certain "traditionalism in crisis and idealistic philosophy - these condition the works of Söderblom and Billing, and form, to some extent, the background of Lundensian theology."³ He asserts the importance of both theologians as formative influences on Gustaf Aulén and consequently on Lundensian thought; and yet Ferré admits that both Söderblom and Billing lend themselves with greatest difficulty to theological description because their thinking reflects "varied streams of thought, interwoven into a personal but not intellectual system of ideas."⁴ The qualitative descriptions of Aulén's "classic" view of atonement as dualistic, dynamic-dramatic, and dependent upon a particular theocentric approach lead one back time and again to Söderblom and Billing.

Commending Söderblom's achievements, Aulén himself indicated what he perceived to be, apart from Söderblom's notable contributions to the study of world religions, his Uppsala mentor's five principal themes: the problem of

revelation; the doctrine of the Church; Luther research; the work of Christ and especially the significance of the cross; and the ecumenical task.⁵ These five themes encompassed the life-long ambitions of Nathan Söderblom.

Söderblom was born on January 15, 1866 in Trönö, Hälsingland, a picturesque rustic section of forests and lakes in east-central Sweden near the Baltic coast. His father, the local pastor, was a man of stern disposition, much affected by strains of Swedish Pietism; the mother of Danish descent, a softer type embracing a poetic and light nature.⁶ In 1883, Söderblom enrolled at the University of Uppsala; in later years, the historic Uppsala would figure prominently in Söderblom's career as professor, archbishop and ecumenical pioneer. While a leading student in Uppsala's theological faculty, the energetic Söderblom manifested a special interest and spirited involvement in the rapidly growing Student Missionary Movement; this initial outreach to a more universal sense of Christianity marked the first steps of what was to become a major driving force in his life.⁷ After successfully completing his preliminary degrees in theology, Söderblom advanced to further academic pursuits. Despite the bright young man's personal interest and acute ability in Old Testament and Church history, Söderblom undertook the task of specializing in Persian religious ideas resulting in his doctoral dissertation, La vie future d'après le mazdeïsme, à la lumière des croyances parallèles dans les autres religions,

étude d'eschatologie comparée, which he defended at the Sorbonne (1901) during his tenure as priest-chaplain to the resident Swedish community in Paris.

Returning to Uppsala in 1901 as professor in "theological encyclopedia and theological prenotions," the new doctor already had established himself as an authority in world religions. In 1903, Söderblom published Uppenbarelsereligion, the Nature of Revelation; that same year he revised C.P. Tiele's Compendium on World Religions.⁸ 1910 witnessed the publication of Religionsproblemet inom katolicism och protestantismen, an analysis of the Modernist trends in Roman Catholicism. During the 1912 term he lectured on world religions at Leipzig. On May 20, 1914, Nathan Söderblom was appointed Archbishop of Uppsala, the major ecclesiastical See in Sweden. From that position, Söderblom directed much personal physical energy and spiritual vigor into movements seeking peace and a more unified Christian community during these turbulent years of world war and its aftermath. Söderblom's courageous search reached a significant highpoint in August, 1925 when he welcomed to Stockholm and his beloved Uppsala the delegates to the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work.⁹ In 1930, as a sign of worldwide recognition, Söderblom received the Nobel Peace Prize.

These years as archbishop and ecumenical champion witnessed the publication of several notable theological works: Gudtronsuppkomst - Origin of the Belief in God

(1914); Ur religionens historia - Out of the History of Religions (1915); Humor och melankoli och andra Lutherstudier - Humor and Melancholy in Luther (1919); Christian Fellowship (1923); Kristi pinas historia - The Story of Christ's Passion (1927).¹⁰ In 1931 Söderblom accepted an invitation to present the Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh. The archbishop had written only a part of what he intended to deliver when he died at Uppsala on July 12, 1931. The completed portion of the Gifford Lectures appeared posthumously as The Living God in 1933.¹¹

Aulén's statement concerning the five chief themes of Nathan Söderblom's theological exploration illuminates the foundational contributions which emerge in Aulén's own theological pursuits. Of these five enumerated by Bishop Aulén, the two topics of revelation and Christ's salvific role relate most directly to Aulén's soteriological presentation. Söderblom's understanding of these two theological areas is linked intimately to the observations and conclusions stemming from his analysis of world religions.¹²

Söderblom's investigation of world religions led him directly to that special distinctiveness which characterizes Christianity. In short, Christianity conveys a religious experience rooted in divine revelation through human history. This divine revelation takes place not in a smooth, orderly process but in a struggle against opposing forces; hence, it involves all of the tension and difficulty

inherent in human life. The God who so discloses himself is a living God who confronts opposition. Suffering does not remain alien to this divine being, but rather engages this personal God in the conflicts and ambiguities concomitant with human existence. Jesus, then, as perfect revelation of the Father is caught up in this very struggle; hence, Christian revelation is historical and full of tension. A sense of "dualism," of opposition, accounts for this tension, and this pervades God's self-disclosure and its religious consequences.

In his publication, Uppenbarelsereligion, Söderblom affirms that this tension, this "dualistic" conflict characterizes the prophetic religions of Persia and Israel; and yet this dualism is not a metaphysical one but a practical, moral and religious dualism:

Does a monistic conception belong then to the essence of prophetic religion? No. In the prophetic religion there emerges another dualism, which is not a metaphysical, speculative one, a contrast between spirit and matter, but a₃ practical, moral, and religious dualism.¹³

And while Söderblom respects the validity of the dualistic Persian religious experience, he, nevertheless, insists on the uniqueness of Christianity as progressing even further in this struggle:

Zoroaster had not sufficiently sounded the depths of suffering. The power of a religion is not to be judged by its hymns of praise, but by its experience of the misery and darkness of life. Only one religion has gone as far down into the abyss as the religion of the pain of the world, the Indian religion, yes, deeper than the Indian religion.¹⁴ This religion is Christianity.

Söderblom reflects that, while the dualism of Parseeism is similar to that of Christianity, "the revealed religion perfected in Christianity, is not caught in metaphysical dualism, but has broken through it by its experience of the will of God through love, acting redemptively in spirit and nature."¹⁵ Söderblom stresses his position by declaring that the "dualism of the Gospels" is one of the most significant developments within revealed religion.¹⁶ Advancing further, he pinpoints Jesus in relation to this dualism and boldly claims: "Jesus has sharpened this dualism, not weakened it. No one has penetrated farther into the problem of evil than he with the words: 'An enemy hath done this' (Matt 13:28)."¹⁷ As the author continues his line of thought, there unfolds the picture of a Jesus who engages opposition and oppression:

Jesus presents no theodicy, no defense for God in the terrible and mysterious trial of sin and misery, defense of the kind which the friends of Job had on their tongues and about which apologetics in all ages has shown much well-meaning concern.¹⁸

This dualism cannot be weakened, Söderblom insists, without damage to the power of the Gospel message:

All attempts within Christianity to escape from or to get over this dualism have either weakened the power which lies in the courageous realism of the gospel, or else led to the absurdity of putting the dualism in the very being of God. This holds true also of all attempts to make of evil but a shadow in and for the harmony of the picture, an element necessary to higher development.¹⁹

It is within such a dualistic framework that Söderblom envisions God's self-revelation taking place. This

revelation and its effects present no smooth, easy progression, but rather "a struggle against resisting forces."²⁰ And within the context of this type of revelation, Söderblom highlights ideas that convey the full impact of his theological perception:

It is clearer than ever to me that dualism - not an absolute dualism, but one with hope and certainty of the attainment of unity - more accurately than monism reproduces reality the more deeply we penetrate into its very life. Anyone who has been rocked to sleep in monism has never felt "the depths of Satan." I do not begrudge him his escape. But he cannot claim²¹ the right to speak as an interpreter of life.

For Nathan Söderblom, a dualistic vision of reality characterizes the sphere of revelation and religious experience. And still such dualism does not affect man apart from actual historical activity. Söderblom corrects any such notion and clearly proposes that "history is the true workshop of God."²² Dualism and historical tension come to light as pivotal theological themes in his thinking. In direct line with these ideas, Gustaf Aulén's use of a dualistic methodology reflects a close coherence with Söderblom's presentation of a God whose activity takes place in the midst of conflict, opposition and tension.

Exploring this dualistic-historical framework, Söderblom evaluates the position of Jesus; and this appraisal demonstrates a strong eschatological direction in the Savior's life and ministry.²³ His Jesus figure does not stand aloof from the struggle and the flow of human events.²⁴ In a sweeping statement, Söderblom demonstrates

the significance of history for the perfect self-disclosure of God in Jesus and his redemptive work: "For he stands within history having the fullest measure of responsibility and under the most powerful dramatic tension."²⁵

Söderblom repeats many of these compelling themes in his last principal endeavor, The Living God (The Gifford Lectures, 1931).²⁶ When he avows the superiority of Israel's prophetic religion, as opposed to the culture-religions of the world, one recognizes his position regarding the dualism found therein. A particular discourse on revelation in history expresses Söderblom's perception:

The most important thing in the world is to say Yes. A No gets its value from the Yes behind. No progress is made by mere opposition and negation. It is easy to pull down, harder to build up. God himself is the everlasting Yes in existence...without No there will be no proper Yes. For then all that denies and destroys, degrades and delays what is right and good would be allowed to remain unattacked and unabolished. That is why a No is necessary in the moral warfare of the individual, in the evolution of religion and in the history of the race.²⁷

Once again as in his earlier presentation, Söderblom insists on the "uniqueness of Christ, as historic person and revealer of God, and the supernatural character of the divine revelation through the prophets and through Christ."²⁸ And possibly with his eye toward a more unified Christian community, Söderblom underscores the fact that "Christ himself, the Word made flesh, is the centre of the Christian fellowship."²⁹

As Söderblom proceeds in the section of the Gifford Lectures dealing with the "Religion of Incarnation," his

presentation of Christ's work intensifies and leads directly to the question of suffering, the anguish of the innocent, and the problem of Christ's cross. He depicts the absurdity of the cross and affirms that Christ has reversed the situation. With penetrating accuracy, Söderblom asks the necessary question and unhesitatingly responds:

What changed the situation? An investigation of the Crucified, his words, his life, the reason for his punishment, his friends, his aims make the answer obvious. The reason was his Love. This Love is a power, when it sacrifices itself heroically.³⁰

Söderblom vigorously attests that "the cross became God's method for proving his love, which did not shrink back from anything, but recklessly used the most effective means."³¹ Here Söderblom focuses attention on the importance of acts, of deeds for God's intention of revelation and salvation. And still Söderblom feels that this does not suffice as he proposes that "greater than action is suffering - not the lifeless suffering to which we submit, but living voluntary suffering - both for him who suffers, and for him for whom the suffering is borne; the suffering possesses a still higher value than action."³² Söderblom explains why this is the case:

For suffering carries on and perfects action, after the hand has lost its strength. Suffering unites more than acts can do. "If I may not serve thee, if I may not suffer for thee, thou hast no part in me." Suffering seals the bonds of nature between mother and child, between husband and wife. Suffering creates new bonds; and suffering purifies; it means a still₃₃sterner purification and decision than action.

While Söderblom stresses repeatedly the importance of God's actions, he refuses to ignore the recurring difficulty of the place of suffering in the salvific process. Similarly, Aulén's soteriology approaches the problem of suffering in the context of Christ's victory over all bondage.

Focusing attention on the cross as the "most awful thing on earth,"³⁴ Söderblom turns the situation around and reflects that herein man himself is no longer seeking God but that "the cross is the strongest testimony that God has been seeking man."³⁵ Appreciating mankind's religious experience, Söderblom has no intention of underestimating evil as the powerful reality with which God's love must contend.³⁶ This dramatic confrontation with the reality of evil in a situation of love and suffering manifests the mystery of Calvary; and this strange state of affairs "...is not the work of man seeking God, but the work of God seeking man."³⁷ Söderblom's appreciation for the depth and power of evil, as well as his assertion of an absolute theocentric base for God's redeeming action, concurs with Aulén's repeated insistence on the same theological principles.

Reviewing Söderblom's ideas in the latter part of the twentieth century, one can easily miss the point that they signified an extraordinary change in theological direction. While Aulén's theology connects genetically with Söderblom's and finds ample expression in his analysis of the God-picture and the atonement, at the same time, Aulén does not overlook the truly revolutionary impact of this

alteration in theological intention and expression.

Writing in the first volume of the Svensk teologisk kvartalskrift, Aulén surveyed this theological transformation in an article entitled "Sekelskiftets teologi - en återblick" (Turn of the century theology - a retrospect).³⁸ He argued that Lutheran Orthodoxy, Pietism, the Enlightenment, and the theology of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had contributed together to a deformation of the Christian message; there emerged the pressing necessity to recapture the essence of Christian faith. For example, Aulén described the attempt of the nineteenth century to rediscover the historical Jesus ("Jesu historiska person") in his proclamation and teaching ("förkunnelse," "lära"), to serve a normative function for Christian belief, since the basic teachings of Jesus ("enkla lära") had been obscured by doctrines ("kyrkolära"). While this state of affairs in theology found acceptance, Aulén recognized its negative consequences: historical criticism had degenerated into historicism; stress on the personalistic had led to a religious individualism; an ethical emphasis had encouraged a type of ethicism.³⁹ Furthermore, in challenging the sterility of Protestant Orthodoxy, the nineteenth century theology had produced in its place a humanized God-image with Jesus as a sort of "ideal man."⁴⁰

Aulén enunciated a constructive remedy for this weakened theological condition.⁴¹ As a necessary change of

the theological framework ("förändrade riktlinjer"), he advanced three essential positions effective of such improvement: 1) a dynamic-dramatic basic outlook ("den dynamiskt-dramatiska grundsynen"); 2) a new sense of Christian community ("en ny syn på den kristna gemenskapens betydelse"); and 3) a thoroughly theocentric Christianity ("teocentrisk kristendom").⁴²

Unhesitatingly, Aulén declared that Söderblom, and his counterpart Billing, both had exercised significant influence in this change for the Swedish theological world. He highlighted Söderblom's installation day lecture at Uppsala, September 24, 1901, as symbolically embodying this drastic alteration.⁴³ Benkt-Erik Benktson recalls Aulén's personal appraisal of that historic day:

Söderblom's speech was...like a brilliant fanfare with its catching enthusiasm for the sake of theology and church. We who listened to the speech were in fact, not used to tones like those. Refreshing and encouraging they met us like messengers for times coming....It was not long before we could prove that a changing of the theological atmosphere indeed had taken place.⁴⁴

As far as Aulén was concerned, Söderblom's theological advances aptly conveyed the sense that his thinking was truly evangelical and genuinely Swedish.⁴⁵

Söderblom's unwavering insistence on the dualistic aspect within Christianity displays two features important for Gustaf Aulén's soteriology. First, such religious dualism reveals the reality of evil in all its power and destructiveness. Aulén claims that such a realization is grossly lacking in the monistic, evolutionary and

"humanized" theoretical propositions common to late nineteenth and early twentieth century theology.⁴⁶ Second, a recognition of evil's monstrous capability demonstrates the harsh truth involved in Jesus' atoning struggle.

Interpreting religious dualism, Söderblom's attention fixes on a central goal: to reveal the mystery of the living, redeeming God. Aulén's theological endeavors manifest a developed application of his mentor's pioneering insights.

Relating to Swedish theology, this turn of direction achieved by Söderblom and Billing compares with two other notable "turning points" in twentieth century Christian theology: the theological renewal associated with Karl Barth; and the "new quest for the historical Jesus" of the 1950-1960 period.⁴⁷ Both of these developments heralded a fresh vitality in theological creativity and found wide approval. While the innovative contributions of the Swedes rendered a similar much-needed service, their impact was felt less by the theological world because of the language barrier and because of the general tendency to concentrate on German theology to the neglect of Scandinavian thought.⁴⁸ Nathan Söderblom represented a particular exception to this, not because of his theology primarily, but rather due to his groundbreaking efforts in ecumenism. Nonetheless, Söderblom's role in the theological renewal at the turn of the century vitally influenced the course of future Christian thought.

Söderblom pointedly employs his familiar method and

themes in the Herdabrev of 1928,⁴⁹ Kristi pinas historia - The Story of Christ's Passion.⁵⁰ Here he indicates that "such is the power of sin that the victory over it cannot be peaceably won: only by a life-and-death conflict, and of that conflict, suffering forms a part."⁵¹ The confrontation with evil carries with it suffering, and in this suffering, man encounters the very mystery of life; nevertheless, he does so with a sense of power and hope since "the deepest of all mysteries in life is the power of suffering patiently endured in love."⁵²

As Söderblom examines the situation, he refuses to side-step the difficulties entailed in the question of suffering penetrating into the very personhood of the divine being. Without ambiguity, he probes even further into the matter:

Men have asked first silently and timidly, then more boldly: "Does God suffer with us and for us?" And they have answered: "Yes, God himself through conflict and pain actualizes his dominion over the unfeeling order of nature and the resistance of human inertia and wickedness."⁵³

Such a conception cannot be reconciled with the First Article of our Creed. Yet it corresponds to something which is deeply imbedded in the religious spirit and in the Gospel.⁵⁴

Such an idea, asserts Söderblom, accords with the essence of Christianity and demonstrates that "God was seeking man" in the cross.⁵⁵ And in this saving activity of Christ, evil is unmasked and God's mercy is manifested.⁵⁶ The power of the cross can reconcile and restore because God's love is "a stronger power than the power of sin and evil."⁵⁷

developing these concepts with his characteristic vigor and positioning them at such a crucial point in his theological undertaking, Söderblom asserts with clear-cut precision that "the center of my theology is the atoning passion of Christ."⁵⁸ It is in the cross of Jesus Christ that the revelatory process itself reaches its climax:

What does the Cross tell us? The Cross means suffering - incredible, shameful, unmerited suffering, for that suffering, that destruction, that shame is in the service of love and reveals God's love more deeply than all talk of the heavenly Father's goodness and providence.⁵⁹

In this vivid description, Söderblom's ideas not only affirm God's initiatory role in the saving plan, but also indicate a deep, personal involvement throughout the entire action. Evil is unmasked in all its frightful reality, bitterness, and pain; the Redeemer takes upon himself a terrible burden of suffering out of unselfish love; the cross, nevertheless, bespeaks the ultimate triumph of God's will. All of these characteristics, so graphically portrayed by Söderblom, feature prominently in Aulén's Christus Victor soteriology.

Söderblom's ability and lifetime interest in world religions brought him to the religious confession of a God who discloses himself and actively engages in man's struggle with pain and anguish, a God who is alive in the fullest sense.⁶⁰ And yet this God loses none of his sovereignty, is not diminished, nor lessened by his entrance into the human fray; this living God stands as the ever-holy one.⁶¹ As the living and holy God penetrates the human situation,

individuals are touched by him. He invites them to a union with himself, a joining together which does not absorb them, but results in a state of loving fellowship initiated by God himself.⁶² In Nathan Söderblom's thinking, this living God emerges as holy, active in struggle, and inviting man to a relationship with himself. The history of religions testifies to this God of self-revelation. Söderblom keenly and consistently proposes the superiority of revealed-prophetic religion, where this image of God clearly shines forth, over the so-called culture religions, which confuse the divine image and lose the integrity of the person in a "mysticism of infinity."⁶³ Behind Söderblom's presentation of Christ as Saviour stands this conception of the living God revealing himself in and through the conflicts of human history.⁶⁴ What Gustaf Aulén intends by a soteriology which speaks of dualism and the drama of Christ's victory over the opposing forces of evil cannot be understood without appreciating Söderblom's creative achievement in the theology of revelation and redemption.

Söderblom's emphasis on history mirrors certain points of his contact with the thought of Albrecht Ritschl. In spite of this connection, Söderblom moves far beyond Ritschl's categories. Ritschl would not have been comfortable with Söderblom's insistence on expanding the historical dimension. By so doing, Söderblom proceeds further than Ritschl in projecting the historical aspect as widening itself beyond the limits of the time and space of a

given event. Söderblom's historical perspective considers the on-going religious aspect, the dimension of spiritual meaning and relevance that continues on to the present. Hence, Söderblom proposes a notion of Jesus beyond the narrowed positions of Ritschl and speaks quite unashamedly about mystical features in Christian life. Söderblom insists that one does not experience this without that struggle in which the full impact of God's self-disclosure becomes apparent. Söderblom, therefore, has progressed beyond Ritschl's historicism and monism; and his Jesus figure appears much more involved with the ambiguities and anxieties of human life than the Jesus of Albrecht Ritschl. Writing to his parents during his student days, Söderblom's own words convey his disposition:

It is not enough to make of Christ the best of all men, and our example. This produces moral goodness, the highest. And this we must seek. But it is not religion, and it cannot satisfy the soul. For that, Jesus must be unto us a Saviour, so that through him we may receive God's grace and forgiveness. That is my statement. I am not a real "Ritschlian."⁶⁵

Constructing a more expansive role for history which necessitates a dualistic view as the proper religious background, and stressing the validity of a Christian mysticism, Söderblom demonstrates his break with certain fundamental views of the Ritschlian school.⁶⁶

Nathan Söderblom's presentation antedated the culmination of the Lundensian group; nevertheless, his major theological themes functioned decisively in the theology of Lund.⁶⁷ On the other hand, one can discern marked

differences between Söderblom's emphases and those of the fully-developed Lundensian thought. Nels Ferré summarizes Söderblom's distance from this methodology:

His Ritschlian stress on the ethics as conditioning God's grace, his idealistic concept of revelation as illumination, as norms to be imitated, his activistic idea according to which individual religious insight is conditioned by moral rectitude, his teleological vision of the one unknown Will strugglingly realizing its purpose, his belief in the soul in animistic terms as a distinct entity enduring through life and death in forms unknown - these notions, among others, definitely preclude Söderblom's ideological inclusion in the Lundensian roster.⁶⁸

But Ferré maintains that even beyond these varying points, what separates Söderblom most from the later Lundensian methodology is his style, his breadth of thought and vision, his comprehensiveness: "Deeper than by any ideas, however, he differs by means of his cosmopolitan attitude which craved alliances, not isolation, constructive, comprehensive synthesis, not intellectual distinctness."⁶⁹ Whereas the Lundensian methodology and approach in its fullest stature may have a propensity for seeming dry, overly intellectual, and almost unrelated to actual life, the method and substance of Söderblom appears vivid, fresh, ever-alive and grasping for true reality in all its forms and variations. Söderblom's theological thought accurately reflects his own person, "a generous mind," "unafraid to be inconsistent with past utterances and yet willing to be the servant of a few large ideas."⁷⁰ Ferré captures Söderblom's distinctive character in these terms: "He loved religion and loved truth; deep in his soul he was convinced that both belong

together, and that the values of religion were best defended by the fuller light of truth."⁷¹

Many of the chief points espoused by Nathan Söderblom functioned significantly in the theological expositions of Gustaf Aulén. Hence, one naturally inquires: how has Nathan Söderblom conditioned Aulén's thinking? Ferré sees perhaps the most certain and apparent influence in Söderblom's particular type of dualism and his unique approach to the study of specifically religious categories.⁷² In addition, Ferré cites the distinctiveness of Christianity, certain typological analyses in the history of religions, and the view of history as continuous and dramatic.⁷³ Likewise, this author points out that the Swedish Luther renewal, which Söderblom shared with some notable contemporaries, cannot be neglected.⁷⁴ These features issue forth from Söderblom with wide consideration for a maturing eschatological framework and an appreciation for the holiness of God.⁷⁵ And while Söderblom has advanced beyond Ritschl, still one can appreciate the Ritschlian stress on history, the centrality of the Christ-figure, the interest in Luther, and a "bias against metaphysics."⁷⁶

Hjalmar Lindroth, in his overview of the Luther revival in the period, notes some of the same points of influence by Söderblom on Aulén; yet, he also enunciates two other characteristics: the personal feature in the evangelical God-relationship, and Söderblom's understanding of the Christian consciousness of sin "as the expression of

men's total reaction at meeting with God's infinite holiness."⁷⁷ This latter assertion of the consciousness of sin relates to any soteriological presentation which must come to grips with the depths of evil as a powerful force contradicting God and man.⁷⁸ Here once more, Söderblom's brand of dualism, as opposed to any facile monistic view, directly affects the picture of Jesus who has not weakened but rather has strengthened this dimension.

In tribute to Nathan Söderblom, Gustaf Aulén recounts certain features that must be considered in order to appreciate Söderblom's contribution to theological progress. Aulén avows that Söderblom charted certain main directions for further theological development and that he had accomplished this in an unbiased searching for truth, a quest which sought "to penetrate through the shell into the kernel of the matter"; in so doing, Söderblom brought the Swedish theological world to a sense of its own independence and self-esteem.⁷⁹ Because of his own universality, Söderblom engendered a new feeling for the particularity and uniqueness of Sweden, its heritage, and its theological promise.

As one reviews Söderblom's general themes, the following surface as areas affecting Gustaf Aulén's theological presentations:

1. a religious, practical dualism necessary for a valid interpretation of the Gospel message and hence, for the role of the Saviour;

2. a view of the uniqueness of Christian revelation which takes place in the midst of struggle and opposition;
3. an appreciation for the activity of a living God who stands at the center of revelation and man's salvation;
4. a sense that the cross expresses the heart of all authentic Christian theology;
5. a renewed interest in Martin Luther who serves as an outstanding interpreter and guide for the whole Christian Church.

These key points of Söderblom appear in varying measure and are influential in Aulén's theological progression.

One may then proceed beyond these "content" or "concept" affirmations and ask a central question: to what extent does Söderblom directly affect Aulén? The best response to this question lies in an acknowledgment of the "theological atmosphere" of Sweden in these decades. What was happening at Uppsala or Lund at a certain time, especially if it originated with a theologically prominent personage, came quickly to the attention and scrutiny of his peers. This "atmosphere" lent itself admirably to dissemination of ideas, critique, and mutual contributions. Rather than direct lines of influence, one observes a type of "concentric circles" motion whereby ideas flowed out in ever-expanding wide circles within this environment. In such an expansive setting, theological concepts rapidly caught the attention of interested parties and were easily accessible for further development. This type of "atmospheric" sway, as well as the previously mentioned direct lines of thought, characterizes Nathan Söderblom's

influence on Gustaf Aulén.⁸⁰ And this remains the situation with the other outstanding "twin pillar" of this Swedish theological renewal, Einar Billing.

B. Einar Billing: God's Work as Drama

In the preface to his 1968 study of Einar Billing, Gustaf Wingren refers to Billing as the "foremost representative" of the Swedish theological renewal prior to 1920.⁸¹ Understanding Billing's theological contributions and linking them with those of Nathan Söderblom, one can see how both of these figures represent a "foundational" influence on Gustaf Aulén. Wingren characterizes the clear relationship of Billing to Aulén in four particular areas: "the doctrine of the atonement in which God is the acting subject"; "the conception of the Church with God as acting subject in the means of grace" coming directly from the word of the atonement; the Bible and Luther as "two great sources" of theological work; and Luther as "the biblical interpreter for the whole Church," a "doctor ecclesiae universalis."⁸² While these theological points form an integral part of the matured Lundensian school, their origins are to be found in Billing and find their way to Lund via Aulén.⁸³ Gustaf Aulén must not only be considered as a vehicle for Billing's theological insights, but as one who furthers them by his own unique development in the four

major areas of atonement, Church, Scripture, and a fresh appreciation of Martin Luther as a universal Church teacher. Although Gustaf Aulén's name finds ready acknowledgment in connection with Söderblom, his links to Einar Billing bear equal importance.⁸⁴ To chart the path upon which Aulén's thoughts on the image of God, Christ's work, the role of Church fellowship, and Luther proceed, recognition of the "genetic significance of Billing's theology" is necessary.⁸⁵

Einar Billing was born in Lund on October 6, 1871. His father, Gottfrid Billing was selected as Bishop of Västerås in 1884, and later was transferred to the episcopal See at Lund. Einar Billing's personal life and professional activity were centered in Lund, Västerås and Uppsala. In 1920, Einar Billing himself became Bishop of Västerås, a position he occupied until his death on December 17, 1939. His connections, both personal and family, with the important theological centers of Lund and Uppsala gave him a sense of Swedish universalism bridging various regional and intellectual differences. In a similar fashion, the figure of Gustaf Aulén likewise linked Uppsala and Lund.⁸⁶ From 1889 to 1900, Billing studied at Uppsala. Completing his course, he lectured as docent at the university until he became a full professor in 1909. Fulfilling his duties at the university, he also ministered as a local pastor. In 1920, his formal teaching career ended as he ascended to the episcopal Seat of his father's former diocese of Västerås. Wingren comments that this marks the end of his

major theological writing and that therefore Billing's theology "must be characterized as 'Swedish theology before 1920'."⁸⁷ Billing's own personal life differed from that of his exuberant, ever vibrant theological colleague, Söderblom. A more difficult side of human nature appeared in Billing: "In his personal life he tended toward self-examination and vexation of spirit. At certain times he was subject to deep depressions, like many others who have given certainty and strength to their fellowmen."⁸⁸

Billing's student days at Uppsala began in the theological unrest in Swedish academic circles which resulted from the onslaught of liberal ideas, especially concerning biblical criticism. This liberalism was characterized by a scientific-critical approach to Scripture and by the unfolding features of Ritschl's theology. The traditional theology of Sweden found itself under severe challenge. Billing recalled quite pointedly his reaction to the new method of biblical criticism engendered by Julius Wellhausen's Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels.⁸⁹ This move away from traditional biblical understanding led him to what was to become a dominant assertion of Billing's biblical theology - God as one who acts in history; the dramatic perspective of God's saving activity stood clearly in sight. The fashionable view of Scripture had obscured the real content of the Bible; now as this interpretation came into question, the God who acts appeared more clearly.⁹⁰ A new direction took hold in Billing's

theological understanding, as the dramatic perspective seemed to grow ever more important. As a new creative outlook, this dramatic-historical dimension affected all of Billing's theological writing regardless of the specific subject matter.⁹¹ The emphasis on historico-scientific biblical criticism formed the background for Billing's dynamic-dramatic view of God's activity, much as the study of world religions convinced Söderblom of the dualistic nature of religious reality. A distinctive quality of drama and action characterized Billing's research, and this dramatic perspective "has undeniably been of significance for Aulén."⁹²

Billing appreciated the point that such perspectives give rise to a variety of theological problems which the theologian must face honestly and with determination; this is the only valid path of intellectual-theological service:

They are the ones who must take the first blow, and who if they take their calling seriously, must sense most strongly the antagonism between the old and the new. They are doing outpost service. One side of their special task is frankly to bring into the light the difficult problems of which others are less aware so that they may be openly discussed and be illuminated....If this often unrewarding side of the theologian's task is neglected, it signifies that difficult problems are passed on to the following generation which then receives a disproportionate share of the burden.⁹³

Aulén himself commended Billing's honest search for truth:

Nothing was more foreign to him than to evade a problem. He felt that it was his calling to be a theologian, and at the same time he⁹⁴ recognized the full responsibility of his calling.

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Einar Billing's first major theological work was his academic dissertation completed at Uppsala in 1900, Luthers lära om staten (Luther's Teaching Concerning the State). During his early years at Uppsala as professor, Billing published the three studies which exhibit the core of his theological pursuit: De etiska tankarna i urkristendomen i deras samband med dess religiösa tro (The Ethical Thoughts of Early Christianity in the Context of Its Religious Faith) (1907; second edition, 1936); Försoningen (The Atonement) (1908; second edition, 1921); and Vår kallelse (Our Calling) (1909). Other significant publications included: Den uppriktige och gud (The Sincere Man and God) (1904); De heligas gemenskap (The Communion of Saints) (1911); Luthers storhet (Luther's Greatness) (1917); Universitet och kyrka (The University and the Church) (1923); Den svenska folkkyrkan (The Swedish National Church) (1930); Guds närhet (God's Presence) (published posthumously in 1948) and his historic Herdabrev till prästerskapet i Västerås stift (Pastoral Letter to the Diocesan Clergy of Västerås) (1920). Some major articles by Billing include: "Den teologiska fakultetens ställning vid universiteten" ("The Place of the Theological Faculty in the University"), Vår lösen (1912); "1517-1521. Ett bidrag till frågan om Luthers religiösa och teologiska utvecklingsgång" ("1517-1521. A Contribution to the Question of Luther's Religious and Theological Development"), Uppsala universitets årsskrift (1917); and "Från biskop Gottfrid Billings Västeråstid" ("When Gottfrid

Billing was Bishop in Västerås"), Julbok för Västerås stift (1925).

Surveying the outstanding topics of Billing's theological contributions, one can consider them under three general categories: a) Billing's understanding of God in human history; b) his analysis of Christ's saving work; c) Billing's notion of Church.⁹⁵ For each of these, Billing's scriptural foundation and his interest in Luther provided the methodological tools for his theological presentation.

Much of Billing's "dramatic view of history" appears in his De etiska tankarna. Throughout this treatment, Billing elucidates the perceived difference between the Greek view of history and that contained in the Scriptures. For the Greeks, mankind's history progressed in cycles and was characterized by a certain stability. On the other hand, the Judaeo-Christian revelation departed from this; God was seen as acting and breaking into human events. It was not a calm process, eminently predictable, but one of activity, drama and of struggle.⁹⁶ Gustaf Aulén's regard for Billing's interpretive insight stands out clearly in Aulén's Christological explorations, particularly in his 1965 publication, Dramat och symbolerna.

For Billing, the prophetic role in Israel received its unique quality precisely in this dynamic, dramatic situation. Herein God's deeds emerged as primary; and the most fundamental fact of all was God's act of election. Israel was chosen in God's activity on her behalf,

historically centered in the Exodus event.

In this act of election and its consequences, Billing stresses the unique joining of God's righteousness and mercy; this divine unity constituted the essence of God's choice of Israel. As long as this activity of God joining both righteousness and mercy together was kept foremost in the consciousness of Israel, no major difficulty arose. Billing asserts, however, that Israel lost sight of this harmony and the two were separated. Gustaf Wingren summarizes Billing's interpretation of this situation:

Such a unity of righteousness and mercy grew out of remembrance of the life in Egypt and deliverance from that bondage. When in later Judaism this remembrance faded, and God's acts in history began to seem faraway, then the unity of righteousness and mercy was lost.⁹⁷

Billing sees this in the particular religious thinking contained in Deuteronomy. At this stage, Israel stood as a people not of election but of covenant-legal fulfillment, and the unity of righteousness and mercy disintegrated.⁹⁸ It then became a question of either retributive recompense or indulgent leniency.⁹⁹ Likewise, Israel's sense of communal choice and election dissolved into a preoccupation with the individual and his sins. Billing cites Ezekiel as representative of this deterioration and of Israel's inability to convey to the individual a further indispensable step of divine election, the freedom from sin. In spite of some return to the pristine idea of God's free election and the divine unity of righteousness and mercy in Deutero-Isaiah and IV Esdras, the situation remained bleak.

According to Billing, it is through Jesus, then, that the individual can receive his personal exodus from sin and that the unity of righteousness and mercy can be restored: "In the forgiveness of sins we live through our exodus from Egypt."¹⁰⁰ Billing's predominant ideas in this context are those of divine election and the unity of divine righteousness and mercy. For Billing, all of this is seen from the viewpoint of a God who actively engages in mankind's history; it is a dynamic, dramatic presentation. The author's subsequent publications on atonement (Försoningen) and on the calling (Vår kallelse) expand his theological thinking along these lines.

Billing's stark exposure of the disintegration of divine righteousness and mercy in Israel's history focuses attention on this same question which Aulén confronts in his soteriological exposition. For Aulén, the medieval way of handling God's justice and mercy, especially as conveyed in Anselm's Cur Deus Homo, is unacceptable. Aulén proposes instead that a proper outcome must rely upon the Christ of victory whose divine love transcends all rationalistic distinctions and conquers all opposition. As Aulén probes the problem of the relationship between divine righteousness and mercy, he manifests a distinct congruency with Billing's scriptural interpretation of righteousness and mercy.

Hjalmar Lindroth in his appraisal of the Swedish theologians evaluates Billing's pioneering contributions in these terms:

The new in Billing, which prefigures the following researches, is above all the method he launches. He represents the aim of his work to be mainly a purely historical one, specifically a historical philological one....Along with this he combines the systematic method. The systematic viewpoint must stand alongside the historical as of equal merit.¹⁰¹

Consequently, Billing's theology can be described appropriately as historical-systematic. This theological method approaches its subject from a two-fold direction: 1) an analysis of the subject-content in its historical development throughout the centuries (a längdsnitt, "length-cut"); 2) a study of the subject-content at each important junction in history (a tvärrsnitt, "cross-cut").¹⁰² Employing such a methodology, the theologian scrutinizes the subject matter from the vantage points of historical development and present actualization. Billing utilizes this method throughout, and it forms a necessary base for understanding his principal theological endeavors. Later, Billing reaches beyond just a historical-systematic stance to one that seeks to connect these historical-religious facts with man's ordinary everyday life; the historical-systematic opens onto the wider dimension of faith and the ultimate search for truth.¹⁰³ In examining Billing's methodology, one discerns the process which will feed into the "motif-research" (motivforskning) procedure of the Lundensians.¹⁰⁴ Gustaf Aulén's theological pursuits entail a developed application of Einar Billing's längdsnitt and tvärrsnitt, easily recognizable in Aulén's characteristic research concerning such topics as the

atonement and the God-image in the various epochs of Christian history. While Nathan Söderblom's theological undertakings also utilize the historical perspective, his general methodology has been described as "historical-psychological" because he "tended increasingly to focus attention upon psychological distinctions and similarities."¹⁰⁵ Billing's approach to the drama of God's dealings with mankind remains historical-systematic throughout.

Although Einar Billing's unique application of the historical-systematic method contributed to the future maturation of "motif-research,"¹⁰⁶ it did not escape criticism as including within itself a propensity toward a historical metaphysics.¹⁰⁷ Billing's widening of the "dramatic perspective" to the point of making it a "normative definition of essential religion" represented "an illegitimate extension of a specific religious concept, in open disregard of its categorical limitations."¹⁰⁸ While the later Lundensians found fault with Billing's "metaphysical confusion"¹⁰⁹ in his tendency to go beyond the historically contingent in order to isolate and to postulate normatively certain religious types or ideas (e.g. God as one who acts in history), they themselves became prey to a methodology which led away from the central points of Christian religious history into a positivistic-analytical stance, obscuring the salvific intent of God's entry into mankind's affairs. This forms the substance of Wingren's

critical appraisal of Anders Nygren's theological development.¹¹⁰ Gustaf Wingren mentions two further criticisms of Billing's theological work: Billing's failure to articulate the necessary relationship between theology and philosophy¹¹¹ and Billing's neglect of a doctrine of creation.¹¹² Wingren explains the latter:

...the idea of creation plays a relatively minor role. It is there, but it has no independent claim. It is a by-product of "the exodus," and it has to rest on historical events if it is to stay alive. Exodus can stand on its own right but Genesis cannot.¹¹³

It is not without reason that Wingren's study of Billing in its English version carries the title, An Exodus Theology. Similarly, Gustaf Aulén's critics accuse him of neglecting a proper regard for creation in his soteriological presentation.

Treating of the "dramatic perspective" in the work of Christ, Einar Billing exhibits a substantial contributing role in the theology which unfolds in figures such as Gustaf Aulén. It is, however, in the special area of ecclesiology that Billing remains unsurpassed by his later followers. Not only does Billing have a strong feeling for the Church as a whole, but his innermost person overflows with deep love for the Church of Sweden. His ecclesiological contributions underline this two-fold appreciation for the Church; here Billing rightly deserves the title Aulén accords him, "theological Church father."¹¹⁴ Billing's ecclesiological convictions issue forth from his perspective

on God's historical activity reaching its summit in Christ and continuing in the Church, the living witness and embodiment of this unceasing drama.¹¹⁵

Billing consistently described the Church as the "religiously motivated folk Church," the folkkyrkan, expressing through its parochial structure and territorial localization, God's prevenient grace realized in word and sacrament.¹¹⁶ His constant affirmation of the folkkyrkan as God's activity primarily, and man's only secondarily, leads Billing to a vigorous defense of such practices as infant baptism: "Before a person has made the slightest move to seek God, he has been included within God's prevenient grace."¹¹⁷ From this claim Billing naturally envisions the Church as the instrument for continuing the purpose of Jesus' salvific work, the forgiveness of sins: "For Billing the Church proclaims and mediates the forgiveness of sins."¹¹⁸ It is in this context of prevenient grace and the forgiveness of sins that one must evaluate Billing's dispute with the "free Church" movement in Sweden. He obviously disavows a Church order that appears to be based on human notions of aggregation rather than on a foundation of God's prior choice.¹¹⁹ To appreciate with clarity Billing's exposition of Christ's work as the final, decisive climax in God's dramatic activity, and the relevance of such ideas for Aulén's Christus Victor soteriology, sufficient consideration must be given to the ecclesiological-pastoral dimension within Billing's theology.

Early in his public career, Gustaf Aulén published a short treatise on the evangelical nature of the Church, Evangelisk kyrklighet (1916). While Aulén's thoughts in this context are not dominated by one single concept such as that of the folkkyrkan, nonetheless, Billing's ecclesiological emphases, especially as grounded in Luther, are in evidence. What Aulén writes concerning the Church bears direct relevance to the relationship of Christ's salvific action with its continuation in human history. Aulén asserts two noteworthy points that recur time and again in his soteriological exposition. First, the Church is a community originating in the Gospel ("kyrkan är evangeliets samfundsskapelse");¹²⁰ and second, there exists an intimate connection between Luther's central religious outlook and his ideal of Church ("intimit samband mellan Luthers centrala religiösa grundåskådning och hans evangeliska kyrkoideal").¹²¹ Aulén insists that the Church, in its essence and action, bespeaks the prevenient grace of God ("Guds förekommande nåd") within which sins are forgiven ("syndernas förlåtelse");¹²² in the Church, one experiences the results of Christ's victory.

Einar Billing's concern for the Church not only leads him to such questions as the nature of the national Church but also to that of the individual's role. Billing achieves a highpoint in this regard in his brief tract, Vår kallelse (Our Calling), which condenses many of the theological principles found in his atonement book.¹²³ Utilizing Luther

as the basis for his discussion on the Christian's vocation and its relationship to grace and daily living,¹²⁴ Billing engages himself in a conscious effort to span the gap between one's gift of faith and its consequences for man's practical affairs.¹²⁵ In this calling, man's eternal destiny and his earthly tasks are inseparably united. Billing recalls that this assertion faithfully portrays Luther's concept.¹²⁶ A unique synthesis has transformed man's life and activity, a synthesis of faith in providence and faith in atonement: this synthesis has as its very center the "forgiveness of sins."¹²⁷ Billing states clearly: "The boldest and strictest kind of faith in providence is here inextricably bound up with faith in atonement. From this standpoint the call is the synthesis of faith in providence and faith in atonement."¹²⁸

Everything, however, depends on Jesus' work of forgiveness accomplished as the dramatic climax of God's activity.¹²⁹ Billing confidently claims: "It is exactly the same in Luther: it is an objective deed of God himself which has renewed faith in his providence. But this objective deed is none other than the forgiveness of sins."¹³⁰ Anxiously Billing insists that this is not just a doctrinal affirmation to be set alongside other theological ideas; rather, it constitutes the heart of God's activity and thus the foundation for man's earthly calling. He proposes that Luther recognized this centrality:

For us it tends to become either a doctrine which we in faith "apprehend to ourselves," or else a

purely subjective "experience"; for Luther it meant something far beyond: a real act of God, ¹³¹the living God, through Christ, the living Christ.

Life organized around the forgiveness of sins: that is Luther's idea of the call. ¹³²

Detailing his position, Billing describes Jesus as one who himself has participated in the daily struggle of his own unique vocation. ¹³³ Billing's thoughts give a penetrating insight into the relationship of Jesus with his Father and the mission of forgiveness which constituted Jesus' own personal calling. ¹³⁴ Examining Jesus' activity, Billing refers repeatedly to John 5:17: "My Father is working still, and I am working." ¹³⁵ It is because of the climax of God's activity in Christ Jesus that "in the forgiveness of sins we live through our exodus in Egypt." ¹³⁶

Billing's Vår kallelse combines the specific notions of the calling, forgiveness of sins, and man's personal exodus in the dramatic perspective of God's deeds in Jesus. Billing concludes his treatment in Our Calling by referring to the giving of the Spirit, not in a spiritualized manner, but in relation to God's acts in Jesus: "Only in the measure in which faith in God's providence - faith in the Father, and faith in forgiveness - faith in the Son, meet and combine in our life, can the Holy Spirit be given to us." ¹³⁷

Although Billing's ideas on the forgiveness of sins, the human vocation, and faith in atonement fall into line easily with Aulén's subsequent Christus Victor book and his general approach to soteriology, one notices some

differences in emphasis. For instance, while Aulén stands firmly behind the Lutheran concept of the centrality of divine forgiveness, as for example in his 1915 work, Syndernas förlåtelse,¹³⁸ the idea is not developed extensively in the Olaus Petri lectures. The divergence in emphasis seems to lie in the fact that Billing's work, at least in these theological questions, tends to move toward a more personalized dimension, whereas Aulén's studies retain for the most part a greater affinity for the historical-systematic side. In the final analysis, however, the consistency of theological thought and expression between Billing and Aulén displays a remarkable unity.

In sum, Einar Billing's perceptive discussion of the "calling" reiterates many constitutive elements of his major theological undertakings: a dramatic perspective in God's activity in human history; man's personal exodus in the forgiveness of sins accomplished by Jesus; Jesus' own entry into the drama and struggle of earthly living; God's initiative and victory in the conflict with evil; the Church as continuing an authentic witness of grace to the risen Christ. All of these points are taken up by Billing in a detailed fashion in Försoningen (The Atonement), and they bear significant weight in understanding Gustaf Aulén's later presentation of Christ as Victor.

C. Einar Billing's Försoningen

In 1908 Billing published his major survey of the atonement, Försoningen. Along with De etiska tankarna and Vår kallelse, this concise publication embodies the principal tenets of Billing's entire theological endeavor. Hjalmar Lindroth remarks that "in spite of its brevity, it is one of the works which has exerted, perhaps the greatest influence in the recent decades of Swedish theology."¹³⁹ Furthermore, Lindroth asserts that Billing's production antedates the eschatological emphasis of later European theology:

Long before the advent of dialectic theology, Billing has presented in these works the positively sustaining elements offered by this theology. And before A. Schweitzer and other German theologians held forth eschatology as a constituent element in primitive Christianity, Billing came to emphasize the decisive significance of the eschatological viewpoint for the understanding of the Gospels.¹⁴⁰

Lindroth capsulizes the thrust of Billing's Försoningen in three main affirmations: 1) "the Gospel is not a teaching, but a message filled with dramatic tension" ("existence is life, drama, history"); 2) "the union of grace with justice does not imply a rationalizing adjustment, a cheapening compromise between the two" ("this union is essentially a secret, the mystery of reconciliation"); 3) "the work of Jesus is altogether an expression of God's own activity."¹⁴¹ While Billing's immediate context for the atonement study is Paul's thinking in the New Testament, one detects Billing's

own evangelical interpretation of the content.¹⁴²

In the first part of his book, Billing differentiates the Greek view of history from the biblical one. The former relies on certainty and repetition; the latter deals with that which is new, unpredictable, creative. Israel's history vibrates with this sense of newness: "They look continually to history for the 'new' which the God in history will create."¹⁴³ Billing indicates that when Paul struggles with the problem of justification, he is engaged with this activity of God in history; the paradigm for this deed is God's election of Israel:

It is hardly necessary to point out that when Paul speaks about justification, he does not mean a subjective religious experience as we call it today. He means an objective act by the living God - as objective as the great deeds whereby he once elected the people of Israel.¹⁴⁴

Billing lays heavy emphasis on deeds, events, and acts in the history of Israel as continuing in the person of Jesus; the Hellenistic attitude fails to appreciate adequately this position.

Billing charts Israel's history as one of election. This election takes place in dramatic action, chiefly in the deliverance from Egypt, and in such events as the rescue of Jerusalem from Sennacherib and the return from the Exile.¹⁴⁵ God not only acts on behalf of his chosen ones, but in that very activity, Israel can understand who the Lord is. Action and deed form the vehicle of God's self-revelation. Billing understands the role of Israel's prophets in the linkage of action and revelation.¹⁴⁶ Throughout this drama

of revelatory election, Israel stands as beneficiary of God's righteousness and grace, "the dual center around which all Israel's thinking circles."¹⁴⁷ The choice of Israel must be considered in light of the unity of God's righteousness and mercy. And yet Billing exposes the fact that "the sharpest tension exists between these two ideas."¹⁴⁸ As Billing admits, "It appears difficult, even impossible, to contain the two."¹⁴⁹ And still, Israel's history demands that the two be kept together:

...if they shall keep the significance God has given them in history, they can only be retained jointly. The one who has not come to know the meaning of righteousness, does neither know the meaning of grace.¹⁵⁰

...it was first then that Israel learned to rightly know God's grace. Amos and Hosea belong together. Throughout the entire history of Israel and Judaism the following rule has been continually confirmed: their entire religious life and richness in thought is dependent upon the necessity that both of these ideas in their sharpness and inward tension are retained.¹⁵¹

The writer confirms that the living God of Israel alone forms the basis for their unity, a union which is nothing short of extraordinary:

Then grace, as it were, must break forth through the strict rules of righteousness; break forth like a miracle, nothing less than a miracle of love.¹⁵²

Billing continues on to demonstrate that as Israel's history progresses, the unity of righteousness and mercy begins to deteriorate. Probing the decline, he cites Deutero-Isaiah and Ezekiel. In Ezekiel, the "idea of recompense dominates most absolutely" with the result that

"history follows one permanent established rule - the idea of recompense....There is no room in his thinking for the mysterious and the secret things."¹⁵³ Contrariwise, Billing states, "Deutero-Isaiah never tires to speak about the wonderful, the paradoxical, the unsearchable about the ways of God for man's thinking."¹⁵⁴ Deutero-Isaiah makes no attempt to smooth over "the antinomianism between grace and righteousness" but "is forced to seek a synthesis and to penetrate into the depths in his seeking."¹⁵⁵ The author indicates that Deutero-Isaiah reaches a decisive point in chapter fifty-three with the idea of vicarious suffering.¹⁵⁶

Advancing his discussion, Billing rejects the "false compromises" and "indulgent leniency" of the rabbinical movement in later Judaism.¹⁵⁷ He favorably examines IV Esdras and Paul in this context, but observes that "IV Esdras' view of history issues in Ezekiel's Fiat justitia, pereat mundus, while Paul concludes his view of history with a renewal of the hymn of praise of Deutero-Isaiah: 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out (Rom. 11:33)'."¹⁵⁸ Whatever the results of the breakdown of the unity of righteousness and grace in Israel's history, that unity is restored and brought to its highest point in the coming of Jesus. This act of election, atonement, is "God's own miracle of grace," which is contrary to all calculation and breaks through all rules.¹⁵⁹ It is God himself who synthesizes righteousness and grace in

Jesus' work of salvation. As Billing views it, "A new link was added to the chain of election-deeds. The greatest and the decisive deed was the one God performed when he spared not his Son, but gave him up unto death (Rom. 8:31) and then raised him from the dead (Rom. 4:24)".¹⁶⁰ The full impact of God's new decisive deed in Jesus is realized for each individual who now experiences his liberation from Egypt.¹⁶¹

Billing's study in atonement theology highlights the historical dimension within the election of Israel, the unity of God's righteousness and mercy, and the role of Jesus in man's "personal exodus" from the bondage of sin. The similarities between Billing's ideas and those put forward by Aulén in his Christus Victor atonement view are unmistakable. Using Billing's terms, one can state that Aulén's soteriological proposal seeks to avoid the "false compromises" of a satisfaction scheme, as well as the "indulgent leniency" of watered-down atonement. For Aulén, God's over-reaching agape must be preserved in all its fullness; salvation herein must be comprehended in Billing's sense as "God's own miracle of grace, which is contrary to all calculation and breaks through all rules."

The center focus of Billing's presentation of the atonement drama belongs to "the sending and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, his Son, our Lord."¹⁶² As he develops his treatment of Jesus' atonement role, Billing places "an unusually strong emphasis on the significance of the resurrection."¹⁶³ Billing demonstrates the importance

of Jesus' resurrection not just as a "verification" by God of Jesus' mission, but as an integral part in this work of the atonement.¹⁶⁴ Calling attention to the Acts of the Apostles, Billing contends that for the apostolic preaching, "the resurrection is the 'salvation fact' whose clear proclamation denotes the driving point for the whole message."¹⁶⁵ The resurrection therefore forms the nucleus of Billing's exposition: "The central point in this universal history of election is the work of Jesus; the center of the work of Jesus [is] in his death and resurrection."¹⁶⁶ With the resurrection as a basis, Christian faith looks to the glorified Lord as the foundation for belief. Here, Billing distinguishes between the glorified and "the historical" Christ. His main point is not to devalue the historical activity of Jesus, nor to disparage the attempt to understand Jesus' humanity, but rather to highlight the culmination of Jesus' work which now affects the Gospel message. An appreciation for Christ as glorified and as "historical" provides a sure guarantee that Christian belief will not degenerate into an illusory spirituality.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, this victory does not cease but continues in the unity of righteousness and grace accomplished in Jesus: "...he shall bring it into victory in the same manner as it began in its unity of the judgment of righteousness over sin, and the seeking of the sinner by the forgiving love."¹⁶⁸ Hence, the resurrection enables the believer to go beyond any mere psychological influence or

spiritual motivation provided by Jesus' death and resurrection to a position of entry into the actual power of the event and its consequences.

Aulén's Christus Victor soteriology includes within itself Billing's contention regarding the central role of Christ's resurrection and the unbroken unity between his earthly ministry and the events of Good Friday and Easter. This, however, can seem obscured because much of Aulén's exposition is geared to correcting the historical imbalance of atonement thought in medieval theology as well as in Lutheran Orthodoxy. Since Billing's presentation can afford to be much more straightforward, the resurrection of Christ clearly dominates the entire theological enterprise.

Billing's general approach to the death of Jesus involves two principal assertions: its integral unity with Jesus' resurrection as well as with his whole ministry, and its connection with the notion of forgiveness. The former becomes necessary lest one's views on Christ's death become distorted.¹⁶⁹ Consistently throughout Försoningen, Billing insists on the integral unity of death, resurrection and ministry. His main concern about distortion is to avoid isolating the death from the stance of God's righteousness and thus failing to see death-resurrection as the salvific outcome whereby righteousness and grace are preserved in the highest fashion.¹⁷⁰ The author admits that "the death of Jesus is always, in some ways, the big problem," but quickly adds to that statement his conviction that "the answer which

immediately is needed is given in a complete form by the fact of the resurrection...the great interpreter."¹⁷¹ He considers death as a middle point in the work of salvation which encompasses Jesus' ministry and his resurrection.¹⁷² Billing demonstrates that Jesus' victorious death enables the salvation achieved therein to be effective beyond the confines of the event itself.¹⁷³ This intimate connection of death and resurrection, as the salvific election-deed in Jesus, provides the opening for the continuity of this work as expressed in II Cor 5:18-21.¹⁷⁴ In Pauline thought, the Christian ministry of reconciliation results from "the once for all fulfilled objective atonement-deed, and its subjective application by us in the present."¹⁷⁵

Examining the death of Christ, Billing focuses attention on Paul's use of the concept of vicarious suffering. A clear difference must be maintained, Billing indicates, between a doctrine and fact. The vicarious suffering is a fact in itself, and it serves as a starting-point in Pauline doctrinal interpretation of the atonement.¹⁷⁶ Billing refers to Galatians 3:13 (the curse idea), but carefully proposes that this is only one of the lines Paul uses in treating of vicarious suffering.¹⁷⁷ The atonement fact is a mystery, and several times Billing emphasizes that Paul's thinking does not contain any finished doctrine of atonement.¹⁷⁸ Paul's consideration of vicarious suffering exemplifies this coming to grips with a multifaceted, mysterious divine act. Billing suggests that

the key to comprehending both the fact of vicarious suffering and Paul's attempt to clarify it, lies in the proper unity of righteousness and grace. When this balanced unity is broken, vicarious suffering quickly passes to vicarious punishment with its inherent problematic image of God:

When grace has been reduced to indulgent leniency, righteousness is also on the way to be dissolved - into its contrast, namely, arbitrariness. A stroke of despotism commences to appear in the God-idea....The idea of vicarious suffering...passes over by itself into the idea of vicarious "satisfaction" as punishment-suffering.¹⁷⁹

Billing concedes that for Paul, vicarious suffering presents both an answer and a problem;¹⁸⁰ the resolution of this problem remains in God's paradoxical "miracle of love."¹⁸¹ With direct reference to God's love, Billing observes:

...Jesus even in his death acts first and foremost as the messenger of God. Through the love which unites him, the Son, with the Father, his death becomes God's own act of love. Therewith becomes impossible for us the idea of vicarious punishment-suffering in the death of Jesus, and that he was a bearer of the punishment of the wrath of God. But the idea of vicarious suffering becomes by no means impossible.¹⁸²

Gustaf Aulén's soteriological exposition likewise considers the problem of vicarious suffering. Aulén carefully distinguishes such suffering from notions of punishment and satisfaction. A basic principle emerges distinctly from Aulén's treatment in his 1965 book, Dramat och symbolerna: in loving obedience to the Father's creative and redemptive will, Jesus suffers in solidarity

with sinners.¹⁸³ The heart of the idea remains saving love and not atoning punishment.

Recognizing the synthetic unity of righteousness and grace in the question of vicarious suffering, one reaches Billing's other major point in dealing with Jesus' death, the relationship of death with the forgiveness of sins. Billing clearly discloses his position:

In the death of Jesus alone is to be found the guarantee for the final victory over sin. But it can only be a "guarantee" for this if first and foremost it is itself the decisive, fundamental victory, and if by it, the judgment over sin has been executed.¹⁸⁴

In Billing's view, Jesus' mission primarily conveyed not a teaching concerning salvation but an act of election-atonement whereby the individual was freed in a personal exodus by the forgiveness of sins. As long as Jesus is seen as merely a "teacher," forgiveness is obscured; but when the full impact of election-atonement is realized, forgiveness retains its rightful place.¹⁸⁵ Billing characterizes this forgiveness as "that act of God through which he, in spite of our sins, enters into a fellowship of love with us as his children."¹⁸⁶ Acknowledging the difficulty in retaining the unity of righteousness and grace, Billing affirms that "the possibility of forgiveness is dependent upon the death of Jesus."¹⁸⁷

Billing indicates that the personal temptation struggle of Jesus climaxes at the time of his death, as God triumphs over all thoughts of retributive judgment: "In order to 'save' his life and accomplish his mission he had

begun on earth; in order not to be forced to judge...he chooses to die."¹⁸⁸ The author acclaims the consequences of that final, dramatic struggle:

The message of repentance and "remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Lk. 24:47; cf. Mk 1:15). The only difference is that now this message is to be preached in the name of the risen One.¹⁸⁹

Christ's final decisive victory belongs to God's love which "breaks through all rules of righteousness" and to his own unique righteousness "which stands firmly in opposition to all unrighteousness."¹⁹⁰

Billing's description of Christ's struggle, not only with external forces but also with his self-awareness, shares the conflict motif found in Aulén's viewpoint. In Försoningen, however, Billing places greater stress on the personal aspect of Jesus' conflict than does Aulén in Christus Victor. Here once more, a difference in style and emphasis in these two "victory" soteriologies is evident: Billing, looking hard at the Scriptures, tends to be more personal; Aulén's presentation, more historical and systematic.

As he speaks of Jesus' atoning death and resurrection, Billing highlights over and over the centrality of atonement-election. He indicates that a major defect is to consider this just as a doctrine alongside other Christian doctrinal positions.¹⁹¹ Reflecting the concerns of his time, Billing likewise opposes a theology which reduces everything to psychologizing, and instead he clarifies the

role of theology as one of interpreting the fact, the system, and the continuity of God's history of election.¹⁹²

Fully appreciating the intensity of genuine human struggle, Billing criticizes an attitude which characterizes everything as developmental and, instead, submits that the viewpoint of drama conveys the final truth.¹⁹³ One cannot understand faith apart from this dramatic human conflict: "The nature of faith is and continues to be a struggle. Where faith no longer struggles, it is no longer faith."¹⁹⁴ In faith in the fact of atonement-election, this struggle culminates in the true joy of pure grace.¹⁹⁵

Unfolding his atonement exposition, Billing readily acknowledges the critique that "objective" atonement presentations involve certain "mythological" traits: "It is certainly true in a way, that no genuine doctrine can free itself completely from mythological elements."¹⁹⁶ He responds that the proper criterion to be used in a doctrine of atonement lies in recognition of the historical dimension of God's activity.¹⁹⁷

In accord with his entire theological contribution, Billing accentuates the place of historical deeds and dramatic action as the starting-points of all valid doctrinal exposition and development. He perceives that this process contains its own inherent puzzles and paradoxes, and mentions as an example the tension between an eternal God and the same God who enters into men's history.¹⁹⁸ While recognizing that "our thinking is filled

with such antinomies," Billing appreciates the spiritual reality which here confronts the human mind.¹⁹⁹ There is a certain "tentativeness" about approaching the mysterious action of the living God in history which he readily admits: "Outside the little sphere where I think I can see somewhat clearly, there I can see secret upon secret that still remain in obscurity. In at least a few of them I hope to be able to see in time a little clearer."²⁰⁰ In such a spirit of humble search, Billing concludes his Försoningen with the hope that God's own actions in history will "help us to see clearer the atonement-faith as the heart, yes, the comprehension of faith in the living God."²⁰¹

Einar Billing's Försoningen advances many of the principal theological points later expanded in Gustaf Aulén's presentation of the classic view of atonement. Alex Falk described Billing's work as very much akin to Aulén's, stating that in Billing's atonement discussion the "essential feature is the 'Christus Victor' idea."²⁰² One easily appreciates Falk's reason for making this statement. Aulén himself recognized the significance of his Uppsala predecessor's achievement, calling Billing's composition "one of the most remarkable books of modern time about the Christ drama."²⁰³

The following major theological positions espoused by Billing in Försoningen appear in varied form in Aulén's soteriological endeavors:

- A) the Gospel as a historical drama filled with tension and paradox;

- B) the work of Jesus as a revelation of God's own activity, more specifically as an expression of divine love;
- C) the tension between retributive righteousness and mercy as being comprehended only in light of the mystery of God's redemptive love;
- D) the person of Jesus Christ as central focus in the salvific drama;
- E) the integral unity of Jesus' ministry and the death-resurrection;
- F) the "forgiveness of sins" as a necessary element of Christ's work;
- G) an appreciation for the fact of vicarious suffering but not for concepts that express substitutionary punishment;
- H) an idea of struggle and opposition in the salvific drama and in the personal life of Jesus himself;
- I) a "victory" theme indicating the ultimate defeat of the powers opposing God and mankind.

Many of Billing's foremost ideas are taken up by Aulén and his colleagues. On the other hand, Gustaf Wingren mentions two notable omissions in the later Lundensian presentations: Billing's strong sense of anchorage in the Old Testament is lost; and his unique appreciation for the individual in the salvific drama is obscured.²⁰⁴ In retrospect, however, Einar Billing's boldly innovative contributions in the early part of the twentieth century have added significantly to the development of Swedish theology.

Throughout his writing, Gustaf Aulén exhibited a keen sensitivity to Billing's insights and valued them highly.

He understood his Uppsala predecessor as a theologian's theologian who penetrated into the depth of a religious question.²⁰⁵ Billing's exaltation of God's "election-deeds" ("Guds utkorelsegering"), taking place in the dynamic of human history and culminating in the forgiveness of sins ("syndernas förlåtelse"), corresponded substantially with Aulén's dynamic-dramatic atonement view. While Aulén recognized that other theologians had spoken of God's "election-action" previously, in Aulén's eyes Billing gave a new and decisive meaning to such thinking.²⁰⁶ For Aulén, the dualistic aspect of Söderblom's "revelation-history" ("uppenbarelsehistoria") and the dramatic aspect of Billing's "election-history" ("utkorelsehistoria") constituted the dramatic perspective ("det dramatiska perspektivet") in which the living God redeemed the world by victory over opposition.²⁰⁷

As Aulén characterized his two Uppsala mentors, Söderblom, with his "many sidedness," and Billing, as a theologian of "concentration,"²⁰⁸ he underscored their creative achievements: a new direction in theology had emerged. In no small measure, did Aulén himself continue this progression.

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CHAPTER THREE: Christus Victor 1930 - 1977

A. Introduction

Attempting to chart the origins of Gustaf Aulén's Christus Victor presentation, we have discussed Aulén's relationship to the developing theological atmosphere at Lund, as well as his connection to the "foundational" ideas of Nathan Söderblom and Einar Billing. Now our attention must turn directly to the very heart of the matter, the soteriological exposition of Christus Victor which first came to public attention in the Olaus Petri lectures of March and April, 1930, at Uppsala. This third chapter of the present study is entitled "Christus Victor 1930-1977" precisely because Aulén's exposition of 1930 does not rest in one series of lectures. The theme appears clearly in a variety of ways in much of Aulén's subsequent theological work. While some shifts of emphasis in his presentation are discernible during the next five decades, the original exposition of the Olaus Petri lectures emerges over this period as substantially unaltered. The study presented here surveys how Aulén's Christus Victor exposition developed and progressed over the years until his death. The result of this probe demonstrates that in the Christus Victor presentation, Aulén's position remained essentially the same after almost fifty years. This fact in itself substantiates the perspicacity of Aulén's original insight.

It is interesting to note that any writer examining Aulén's soteriological thinking faces the question of how exactly one refers to *Christus Victor*. Should it be said that one is dealing with the English-Latin title of an original Swedish publication, and that, therefore, such a phrase should be properly italicized as the title of a book? Or is it rather that the term refers to a particular theological exposition that has taken on its own character in recent Christian theology? In a sense, Aulén's own methodology of a "dual aspect" to a given situation may answer such a question. On the one hand, we are referring to a book, while on the other side, we are treating of a particular soteriological presentation that goes beyond the specific publication of the Olaus Petri lectures. The idea contained in the book Christus Victor expresses a unique soteriological hypothesis; and, to Gustaf Aulén's credit, he has brought that soteriological approach to the fore in twentieth century theology.

In constructing such a study, one faces also the question of method. How should the central thoughts of Aulén's *Christus Victor* exposition be presented? First, one may analyze the various characteristics of Aulén's soteriological exposé. Aulén speaks of a continuous/discontinuous work of God, of the traditional tyrants opposing mankind, of the image of God, etc.; these then could serve as outline points of presentation. Likewise, the chronological method may be quite useful. For

instance, one could attempt to divide the *Christus Victor* exposition according to the lines pursued by Aulén in his theological work of the 1930's, 1950's, 1960's, etc. While both of these methods are possible, a third method, which combines the two, is utilized here. The third method concentrates on the following ideas:

- a. Aulén's original Christus Victor publication and its connection to several other significant works;
- b. an exposition of Aulén's 1965 publication, The Drama and the Symbols, since this book serves as an intended renewal of Aulén's original presentation;
- c. a discussion of Aulén's position vis-à-vis the "earthly" Jesus because this appears as an area where Aulén has altered some previous ideas, and where the charge of Aulén's critics regarding a "docetist" view of Christ can be evaluated;
- d. an investigation of two major Swedish books, one early in Aulén's career and the second later, which analyze the critical themes of the God-image and faith.

This method thereby can survey whatever shifts of emphasis Aulén has made throughout the years 1930-1977, and at the same time, examine the validity of Gustaf Aulén's soteriological affirmations.

B. Christus Victor: a soteriology of struggle and victory

We can initiate Aulén's soteriological exposition by briefly stating his proposal: the saving work of Jesus Christ is accomplished in a struggle against the forces which hold man, God's creature, in bondage; this saving work belongs properly to God himself and not to man; it is a divine victory truly bearing within itself man's salvation and thereby effecting genuine atonement and reconciliation between God and sinful man. This "classic" idea stood as the fundamental expression of Christ's saving work throughout the first millenium of Christianity. Such an essential idea became distorted by the rationalizing structure of Anselm's soteriological enterprise. On the other hand, Martin Luther signified a return to this "classic" idea; yet Lutheran Orthodoxy expressed atonement by reverting to the rationalistic Anselmian method. Neither the theology of the Enlightenment period, nor that of the liberal tendencies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, offered a suitable view of Christ's saving work. Aulén asserts the essence of Christianity's atonement theology in this "classic" idea of struggle and victory. Such an outline of atonement constitutes Aulén's basic affirmation in his soteriological thinking, and the work Christus Victor embodies Aulén's proposition.

Early in his investigation, Aulén sets the theological stage for describing atonement as taking place in struggle: "Its central theme is the idea of the atonement as a divine conflict and victory; Christ - Christus Victor - fights against and triumphs over the evil powers of the world, the 'tyrants' under which mankind is in bondage and suffering, and in him God reconciles the world to himself."¹ In the special preface Aulén wrote for the 1968 edition of Christus Victor, his very first sentence portrays this struggle and victory theme: "THE CENTRAL idea of Christus Victor is the view of God and the Kingdom of God as fighting against evil powers ravaging in mankind. In this drama Christ has the key role, and the title Christus Victor says the decisive word about his role."² Referring to the atonement, Aulén stresses the same point in the German summary of the Olaus Petri lectures: "Es ist eine Kampf und Siegestat. Gott bekämpft und besiegt in und durch Christus die Mächte des Verderbens, die 'Tyrrannen' unter denen die Menschheit gefesselt ist, und versöhnt sich dadurch mit der Welt."³ Without hesitation he characterizes the salvific work as that of the "CHRISTUS VICTOR," "das Hauptthema des Versöhnungsgedankens der alten Kirche."⁴ Such a quality of struggle and of conflict enables Aulén to describe this "classic" atonement idea as "dramatic."⁵ Aulén utilizes this incisive term throughout his presentation.

One may properly ask in what sense Aulén employs the word "dramatic." He provides an answer in a later work,

dramat och symbolerna, stating, "Action versus opposition equals drama."⁶ While the action described is Christ's, what may be said of the opposition involved? How can it be that God faces resistance to the extent that what results is a Kampf? Once Aulén in his exposition of this classic idea introduces the notion of opposition, then he must detail the exact nature of these hostile forces. Here, Aulén proposes his notion of "dualism."

Aulén carefully delineates the concept of "dualism." It is not the metaphysical dualism of the Persian religious movement, but rather a specifically "religious dualism" which confronts man in the Old and New Testaments. "Dualism," he explains, "is not used in the sense of a metaphysical dualism between the infinite and the finite, or between spirit and matter; nor, again, in the sense of the absolute dualism between good and evil typical of the Zoroastrian and Manichean teaching, in which evil is treated as an eternal principle opposed to good."⁷ It is rather, asserts Aulén, an idea which expresses "the opposition between God and that which in his own created world resists his will...."⁸ Aulén recognizes this as a specifically religious dualism which provides the background against which Christ's saving work is accomplished: "Der dramatische Versöhnungsgedanken ist dualistisch orientiert. Das Versöhnungsdrama zeichnete sich gegen den dualistischen Hintergrund ab."⁹ The author makes clear his position that this cannot be an absolute dualism since, "in the scriptural

view evil has not an eternal existence."¹⁰ That Aulén's dualism is a religious one, and not an absolute, metaphysical dualism, remains an important fact regarding Christ's ability to confront and to overcome the forces opposed to him. Aulén's theological presentation recognizes both the legitimacy and the limitation of dualism.

In a specific section of The Faith of the Christian Church, Aulén expands on this concept of dualism:

Existence contains elements that are foreign¹¹ to the divine will and in conflict with it.

The conflict motif has a central place within primitive Christianity. Every attempt to understand primitive Christianity without giving sufficient¹² attention to this fact is doomed to failure.

He insists that the Christian faith cannot ignore or hide this dualism because faith stands "opposed to every attempt to blunt and minimize God's continuous antagonism to evil."¹³ Yet, this dualism is not absolute nor can it be, since God is "unconditionally sovereign whether this sovereignty reveals itself in grace or in judgment."¹⁴ Aulén here recalls the attempt of the theology of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to dismiss this dualistic element or to have Jesus somehow accommodated to it.¹⁵ The monistic, evolutionary world-view of the liberal theological tendencies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries finds no place in Aulén's renewed appreciation for this religious dualism. Displaying this dualism, Aulén's exposition echoes Söderblom's constant insistence on the dualistic element of early Christianity.

In sum, Aulén's soteriological discussion in the early sections of Christus Victor manifests a clear and distinct relationship to Söderblom's affirmation of religious dualism and to Einar Billing's consideration of the dramatic aspects of God's saving activity. Two principal qualities emerge in Aulén's portrayal of Christ's struggle and victory: its background is dualistic; its accomplishment is dramatic.

In the initial portion of Christus Victor, Aulén argues that this dramatic-dualistic idea of the atonement embodies a genuine atonement in the full and proper sense of the term.¹⁶ What the author intends is not just a salvation concept, but the reality that God and man are truly reconciled in a process of atonement. He states pointedly:

Certainly it describes a work of salvation, a drama of salvation; but his salvation is at the same time an atonement in the full sense of the word, for it is a work wherein God reconciles the world, to himself, and is at the same time reconciled.¹⁷

Also zuerst: Es handelt sich hier um eine Versöhnung in den eigentlichen Sinne des Wortes, nicht um eine 'Erlösung' im Gegensatz zur Versöhnung, sondern um eine Erlösung, die zugleich und vor allem Versöhnung ist.¹⁸

In order to counter any effort to separate the salvation and reconciliation aspects of the atonement, Aulén underscores the unified character of Christ's saving work.

Considering Aulén's presentation of atonement and salvation as unified, one notices an expression of paramount importance for Aulén's soteriological exposition. The term "at the same time," (zugleich) (på samma gång) describes an essential function in Aulén's thinking. As evident in the

prior citations, Aulén's method projects the notion that, while a certain effect or facet is apparent in a situation or fact, "at the very same time" something else significant takes place. In the instances quoted, Aulén accentuates two vital points of soteriological exposition: salvation; and God reconciling the world to himself. Regarding the former, he notes that in salvation, "at the same time" we experience a true atonement. And while God is actively reconciling the world to himself, "at the same time" God is reconciled. This concept of a "simultaneity," whereby one experiences more than a single aspect in a given situation, holds a crucial place in understanding Aulén's theological method. In Benkt-Erik Benktson's Dogma als Drama, the author refers to the "so charakteristische doppelte Perspektive des Versöhnungsdramas."¹⁹ Benktson's description of the atonement thinking in primitive Christianity contains the idea of Christ's struggle and victory, and recognizes this as authentic atonement. Furthermore, Benktson illustrates a double perspective and simultaneity in the atonement: "Die Alte Kirche verstand Christi Lebenswerk als Kampf und Siegeshandeln nach zwei Seiten hin: Christus hat die 'Tyrannen,' die die Menschheit schinden, bekämpft und besiegt. Dieser Sieg enthält gleichzeitig die Versöhnung Gottes mit der Welt."²⁰

Benktson's terms gleichzeitig and zwei Seiten convey a methodological key for understanding Aulén. One needs to recognize that while both these notions of double aspect and

of simultaneity often are concurrent in Aulén's exposition, such as in speaking of God as one who reconciles and, at the same time, is reconciled, or of salvation which simultaneously renders atonement, nevertheless, Aulén's employment of the terms varies according to the context.²¹ In sum, four descriptive qualities of Aulén's atonement explanation stand out clearly: 1. dualistic; 2. dramatic; 3. possessing a double aspect, a double sidedness; 4. having a character of simultaneity.

For Gustaf Aulén, the dramatic work of Christ's atonement possesses a unified character which he describes as "a continuous divine work" - both in its origin and execution.²² He distinguishes this type of atonement from a "discontinuous" divine work which "has indeed its origin in God's will, but is, in its carrying-out, an offering made to God by Christ as man and on man's behalf."²³ In this manner, Aulén differentiates what he calls the "dramatic" atonement and the "objective" type. He proposes a three-fold classification of atonement thinking in Christianity:

1. the "objective" type which is identified with Western Church thinking and which Aulén terms the "Latin type"; Anselm is the major figure for Aulén here;
2. the "subjective" type of atonement which concentrates on a change in mankind's attitude; Aulén discusses Abelard in this context;

3. the "objective" type which expresses itself in a dramatic struggle and victory and which Aulén calls the "classic Christian idea of the atonement"; in this category he situates the early Church and Martin Luther.²⁴

While Aulén remains aware that both "objective" and "subjective" elements are to be found in atonement explanations,²⁵ nevertheless, he employs his particular terminology, always making a clear distinction between the "objective" type identifiable with Anselm's method, and his own "dramatic" type rooted in the foundations of Christianity and to which Luther gives new emphasis:

Es handelt sich hier um den Versöhnungsgedanken, der mit dem Christentum selbst geboren ist, der in der ganzen alten Kirche leitend war und der schliesslich durch Martin Luther vertieft worden und zu neuem Leben hervorgewachsen ist.²⁶

Because he considers this "dramatic" atonement type as running throughout early Christianity's history, as well as expressing the heart of Christ's saving activity, Aulén designates it the "classic" type.²⁷

Continuing his proposition, Aulén notes the neglect of the classic idea in Christian thought. He proposes several reasons for this: a) controversial attitudes by historians of dogma toward Protestant Orthodoxy and its own version of "objective" atonement which obscured the validity of the classic view in the polemic between "objective" and "subjective" atonement ideas; b) the tendency of theologians to confuse and to identify uncritically the classic and

"Latin" views of atonement; c) the fact that neither conservative theologians who defended the Orthodox theology nor the liberal theologians who attacked it "were naturally disposed to give sympathetic consideration" to the classic idea of the atonement; d) "Dualism was not popular with the liberal Protestant theology of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; but the classic idea of the atonement is dualistic and dramatic....It [the liberal theology] had no place for the dualistic element in Christianity...."²⁸ On this latter point, Aulén insists quite emphatically, "It is impossible to eliminate it [dualism] without representing early Christianity as something quite other than it actually was."²⁹ Such an emphasis on the dualistic nature of Christianity, as the background against which the salvific drama is played out, contrasts sharply with the monistic character of the eighteenth and nineteenth century theology:

Aber die leitende Theologie des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts hatte einen ausgeprägt monistischen Charakter und gerade darum kein Verständnis für das auf dualistischem Grunde aufgebaute Versöhnungs-drama.³⁰

This theology considered the dualistic as an irrelevant (belanglos) element that had crept into Judaism and Christianity from outside.³¹ Aulén repudiates this devaluation of the dualistic element.

It may be well to consider at this point that a lasting achievement of Gustaf Aulén's Christus Victor exposition lies in the fact that more clearly than anyone before him, Aulén addresses the confusion regarding the

so-called "objective" approach to atonement from two points of consideration: 1. he clearly delineates the difference between the "classical" view and the type of "objective" atonement proposed by the "Latin" type connected with Anselm, and he criticizes the idea that the early Patristic presentations acted as a preparatory stage for the Anselmian proposition; 2. he cautions against a too hasty identification of an atonement type based upon the images and terms employed, e.g. sacrifice or substitution language.³² Presenting this clarification, Gustaf Aulén has notably contributed to the scope of soteriological discussion in the last six decades.³³

Analyzing the dualistic background of Christianity as well as theological problems in general, Aulén disputes the position which proposes that a rational solution is always demanded. Along these lines, he challenges those who would maintain that the more logical explanation is always to be preferred as more correct:

There lies behind this criticism a particular view of the nature of theology: an implied demand that the Christian faith must be clearly expressed in the form of a rational doctrine. It was felt, if it was not stated in so many words, that the superiority which Anselm was assumed to possess over the Fathers of the early Church lay³⁴ in the greater rationality of his teaching.

Of course, herein Aulén manifests the Lundensian theological bias against the metaphysical and the rationalistic. This same influence appears in Aulén's critique of the rational structure of Anselm's soteriology.

Reviewing Christus Victor, Aulén himself summarizes the central proposition of his soteriological exposition:

The history of the doctrine of the atonement is a history of three types of view, which emerge in turn. The classic idea emerges with Christianity itself, and remains the dominant type of teaching for a thousand years. The origin of the Latin doctrine can be exactly determined; it belongs to the West, and it becomes the dominant form of the doctrine of the atonement in the West in the Middle Ages. Though Luther returns to the classic type, and teaches it with unique power, post-Reformation theology goes back to the Latin type, which is therefore common to the scholasticism of both the Roman and Protestant churches.³⁵

Furthermore, Aulén testifies that "Luther, therefore, belongs to the Catholic tradition in the true sense of the word."³⁶ Discussing Protestant Orthodoxy, he alleges that "the fact that Protestantism was seeking to unite the sola gratia principle of the Reformation with a juridical doctrine of the atonement involved it in a fundamental inconsistency."³⁷

Throughout his probe of the three atonement types, Aulén analyzes the features which are both common and distinctive to them, and which support his stated proposition regarding the classic idea of atonement. He does this in respect to the following: 1. structure; 2. the idea of sin; 3. salvation; 4. Christ and the Incarnation; 5. the conception of God; 6. the possibility of a rational theory.³⁸ Let us consider these six points.

1. Structure

Contrasting the structure of the classic view with the other atonement types, Aulén insists that the classic type manifests a continuity of divine operation and a discontinuity in the order of justice and merit.³⁹ By this the author contends that God is wholly responsible for the salvific work; he is not only the source but also the fulfillment of atonement. Whereas the Latin type first predicates the need for human nature to undertake atonement with God, the classic type does not allow human nature to occupy the primary place. Aulén discusses this opinion in his Anselm critique. Not only does Aulén attest to the continuity inherent in the classic view, but he also insists that while God himself accomplishes the atonement actively, he also stands as the one who receives this atonement.⁴⁰ Aulén's double aspect or double perspective appears here quite clearly from the stance of God as active and passive.⁴¹ He likewise details the dualistic background in atonement and insists that the relationship of man to God be comprehended not in the light of a system of merit and justice but rather of grace.⁴² While the Latin type of atonement presents some difficulties along these lines, the so-named "subjective" type of atonement, whereby atonement results from a conversion process in man turning toward God because he has been motivated by the example of Christ, is unacceptable to Aulén.⁴³

2. The Idea of Sin

In the classic view of atonement, Christ overcomes the tyrants holding mankind in bondage - sin, death and the devil. Aulén states that given this observation, sin might appear as an impersonal force in such a view of atonement, whereas it might seem more personal in the Latin type. He disagrees observing that while this Latin view certainly intends to emphasize the gravity of sin, it minimizes sin in light of its moralistic structure encompassing notions of satisfaction and endurance of punishment.⁴⁴ Aulén concludes that the classic view "most fully objectivizes sin and ends up by giving us the deepest and most personal idea of sin."⁴⁵ Emphasizing that this classic idea of atonement displays a wider range in regard to sin and all evil power, Aulén reflects that contrary to the Latin view, the classic atonement type "directs attention not primarily to the punishment or other consequences of sin but to the sin itself."⁴⁶ Christ overcomes sin and all its consequences and sets man free.⁴⁷ Hence, Aulén insists that salvation is to be regarded positively and not negatively.

It is always positive, wherever the classic idea is dominant, whether the actual terms used be forgiveness of sins, union with God, the deifying of nature, or some other. On the other hand, with the Latin doctrine the natural tendency is for forgiveness to be regarded negatively; for it is the fruit of the satisfaction made by Christ that the punishment deserved by men is remitted.⁴⁸

In addition, he indicates that Luther's notion of forgiveness carries a distinctly positive character.⁴⁹

3. Salvation

When he explores the notion of salvation, Aulén affirms that for the "classic" view, the victory achieved by Christ is continued in the work of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁰ He states: "Justification and atonement are really one and the same thing; Justification is simply the atonement brought into the present...."⁵¹ The author criticizes the Latin doctrine as it "gives us a series of acts standing in a relatively loose connection."⁵² He depicts several loose acts: Christ as man making satisfaction for man, and God's acceptance of it; God justifying men by transferring or imputing to them Christ's merits; and mankind being sanctified without organic connection to the preceding two acts.⁵³ Aulén criticizes the fact that the demonstrable, direct relationship to Christ found in the struggle and victory idea is missing here. This same lack of integral relationship to Christ provides the basis for his critique of "subjective" atonement views which depict salvation as a change taking place in man, more or less directly through the influence of Christ.⁵⁴

4. Christ and the Incarnation

Aulén focuses attention on the position that in the classic type of atonement, there is a "close and inseparable connection between the Incarnation and the atonement."⁵⁵ And he notes, "The Incarnation is the necessary presupposition of the atonement, and the atonement the completion of the Incarnation."⁵⁶ In his Christus Victor,

Aulén anticipates the criticism of those who envision such a stance as demeaning the manhood of Christ: "This does not at all mean that we have here a Docetic Christology, which would do less than justice to the true manhood of Christ...."⁵⁷ Furthermore, he insists that the "true manhood receives full emphasis."⁵⁸ And Aulén pointedly challenges the positions which run contrary to the classic view and in themselves pose a threat to understanding God's full involvement in reconciling the world to himself:

But yet, again, this does not mean that the redemptive work of Christ is regarded as performed by him purely as man, or that it gains increased value through the association of the deity with the humanity. It is, rather, that Christ is set forth as the man in whom God both reveals his essence and carries out his work of deliverance and atonement.⁵⁹

In this statement two defective attitudes are highlighted by Aulén: a. the concept which places "man" in the primary spot both as to the necessity and the performance of atonement; b. the notion of a system which sees value in Christ's work only because of an association with the divine nature. For Aulén, the first compromises the position of God as the complete and full reconciler understood from a double-aspect viewpoint of God, both as reconciling and as reconciled, which Aulén has repeated time and again. In the second posture, Aulén sees no integral and substantial connection between the human and divine; and, therefore, this view devalues the uniqueness and integrality of Christ's saving work.

Nevertheless, Aulén's presentation in Christus Victor, as well as subsequently, falls under the criticism

that he neglects the human nature of Christ. Norman Hjelm's study of Aulén (1960) indicates that "Aulén does not adequately make clear the relation of the manhood of Christ and the victory of the divine love over the hostile powers....this is the weakest point in his explication of the classic idea of the atonement."⁶⁰ Along these lines, Hjelm remarks: "The suggestion made earlier...that Aulén is fundamentally a theologian of the Second Article (of the Creed) needs to be amended: he is fundamentally a theologian of the divinity of Christ."⁶¹ Aulén himself remains aware of this recurring objection and makes efforts to clarify this problem, as in his publication, The Drama and the Symbols.⁶² In Christus Victor, he contends that Irenaeus and Luther express this "intimate connection of Incarnation and atonement" but that the Latin type and the subjective view of atonement miss it.⁶³ Likewise, he opposes those "liberal theologians" whose sincerity in recovering an "historical" Jesus led to "a peculiarly abstract and unreal Christ, an idealised humanity," which "actually became in effect a sort of intermediary between God and mankind."⁶⁴ Reading the Christus Victor presentation, one can discern easily those principles which stand as central to a classic view of atonement: a. the status of God must not be jeopardized or impaired by any diminishing of the integral unity of divinity and humanity in Christ; b. the atonement and Incarnation cannot be separated from one another, and must function therefore as a unity. Because Aulén stresses the divine element so

forcefully in Christus Victor, opposing a soteriology which begins with man, his stance leads critics to question his vision of Christ.

5. The Conception of God

Highlighting the major observations of Christus Victor, Aulén turns to the importance of the image of God conveyed by the various atonement views. In the classic type, Aulén insists unreservedly on the dualistic background of the idea; this dualism, however, is not ultimate and cannot overcome the sovereign God.⁶⁵ Likewise, he claims that the "double-aspect" of this dualism must be appreciated: the evil powers are the opposing force and "at the same time these very powers are in a measure executants of his [God's] own judgment on sin."⁶⁶ Aulén explains himself in detail:

This opposition reaches its climax in the tension between the divine love and the divine wrath. But here the solution is not found in any sort of rational settlement; it is rather that the divine love prevails over the wrath, the blessing overcomes the curse by the way of divine self-oblation and sacrifice. The redeeming work of Christ⁶⁷ shows how much the atonement 'costs' God.

One perceives in Aulén's words the insistence upon dualism, the futility of rational solutions, and the intimate involvement of God in the atonement work.

Aulén faults the Latin type of atonement which substitutes the abstract notion of retributive justice for God's personal displeasure, and which effects a rational compromise between the two, whereby "the justice of God receives a compensation for man's default, so that his mercy

may now be free to act."⁶⁸ Concerning the subjective type, Aulén declares that the opposition has been made to disappear, the hostility of the divine love to evil has been obscured, and that thereby this love has become humanized.⁶⁹ The "movement by God to man" of the classic idea of atonement has been altered in that "in the Latin type God seems to stand more at a distance for the satisfaction is paid by man, in the person of Christ, to God," while in the subjective view, "all the emphasis is on man's movement to God."⁷⁰

6. Atonement as a Rational Theory

Summarizing his proposal, Aulén returns to his contention regarding the rational structure of atonement presentation. Of course, he examines the attitude which always seeks a clear-cut rational explanation for religious questions. Readily he admits that the classic view he espouses does not fit this criterion: "The classic type is characterized by a whole series of contrasts of opposites, which defy rational systematization, while the other two find rational solutions of the antinomies along theological or psychological lines."⁷¹ For Aulén, Martin Luther stands as a prime exponent of such paradox. And of these oppositions, Aulén unhesitatingly affirms, "...they are present wherever the classic type appears."⁷² Here, Aulén manifests his Lundensian bias against the attitude which demands rational solutions to religious problems, and in so doing, denies the religious depth of the situation since "theology lives and has its being in these combinations of

seemingly incompatible opposites."⁷³ For Aulén, the monistic and evolutionary world-views of liberal Protestantism are just as faulty in this matter as the avowedly metaphysical and rationalistic approaches of scholastic theology.⁷⁴ With this in mind, Aulén declares that in clarifying the three types of atonement in his exposition, he has preferred the terms "idea," "type" or "view" for the classic view while employing "theory" or sometimes "doctrine" for the Latin and subjective types.⁷⁵ For him, this divine action of atonement is a "motif," a theme, expressed in many different variations and never "shaped into a rational theory."⁷⁶ And he adds: "It is therefore of the first importance to distinguish between the classic idea itself and the forms in which it has been expressed."⁷⁷

At this point, one observes Aulén's use of the term motif, especially since the word is associated with Anders Nygren's work, particularly with his book, Agape and Eros.⁷⁸ Aulén attests that his usage differs from that of Nygren even though both employ the term as a methodological tool tracing the origin, form and importance of a religious notion or expression. There exists here both similarity and difference. The similarity lies in the fact that both theologians utilize the term not only in regard to the origins, but also in reference to the "characteristic content and typical manifestations" of religious notions.⁷⁹ Aulén states:

The word "motif" has reference primarily to these religious forces which so to speak produce the respective forms of expression. In our presentation "motif" means the religious

intention, content, and reality which is contained and appears in a certain form of expression.⁸⁰

And he goes on further:

It is necessary to push beyond these forms and formulas, and to reach the dynamic religious ideas, the religious motifs, which are active here. The essential element is not the forms as such, but what underlies the whole, the religious⁸¹ content which these forms seek to express.

The principal difference appears to lie in what Nygren and Aulén intend by their peculiar usage of "motif." For Nygren, it is a theological search for the fundamental aspects of a religious movement, truly a seeking for grundmotiv.⁸² Aulén, on the other hand, prefers a more sweeping approach such as is exemplified by "motif" in the artistic or musical sense.⁸³ He manifests interest not only in the constitutive form and embodied expression of a religious "motif," but also in its content and intent:

But if theology consequently has something to learn from the whole history of Christian thought, it must be understood that it does not stop with the external formulas but penetrates to the motifs and purposes⁸⁴ which these formulas are intended to express.

As the artistic motif blends, summarizes, and unifies the embodied expression or form, it simultaneously reveals the underlying reality which the artist seeks to express and expand. In this, the artist is not constrained by any narrow limits of logical and rationalistic structures. Given his musical appreciation, Aulén can adopt such a methodology and relate it to his theological pursuit of truth.

Reflecting the influence of Lundensian method as well as his own predisposition, Aulén indicates that his aim in Christus Victor is not apologetic but rather an historical one.⁸⁵ Of course, for Aulén as for the theology of Lund in general, such a process entails systematic analysis which surveys the scope of historical developments.⁸⁶ This method deliberately avoids the constraining limits of confessionalism and the restraints of rationalistic explanation. It envisions a situation whereby the historical facts must speak for themselves and what consequence this may have, remains for the observer to decide.⁸⁷ Aulén's intention throughout Christus Victor stands out clearly: "the fundamental idea that the atonement is, above all, a movement of God to man, not in the first place a movement of man to God."⁸⁸ And he observes that here once again: "We shall hear its tremendous paradoxes: that God, the all-ruler, the Infinite, yet accepts the lowliness of the Incarnation; we shall hear again the old realistic message of the conflict of God with the dark, hostile forces of evil, and his victory over them by divine self-sacrifice; above all, we shall hear again the note of triumph."⁸⁹ To hear and to appreciate "the note of triumph" constitutes the heart and soul of Aulén's exposition of the "classic" atonement idea in the Olaus Petri lectures.

These six points (structure, the idea of sin, salvation, Christ and the Incarnation, the conception of

God, and the possibility of a rational theory) provide a workable framework in which Aulén's Christus Victor exposition can be summarized.

Looking at Christus Victor, one can inquire into some of the proximate influences for Aulén's exposition. What particular tendencies and events in Aulén's professional experience, close to the Olaus Petri lectures, have affected the final result, Christus Victor?

First, one must acknowledge that Aulén's theological writings throughout his entire career demonstrate an emphatic historical character. His systematic investigations are developed by tracing the historical progression of a religious idea or doctrine through various periods. In the later phases of his career, Aulén displays less historical structuring, but the definite historical foundation remains always there. A distinctive historical format, however, dominates his early theological works. For example, such an historical framework is plainly evident in his Dogmhistoria (1917), in Den kristna gudsbilden (1927), and in all the editions of Den allmänneliga kristna tron.

Likewise, several important articles he contributed to the Svensk teologisk kvartalskrift during the 1920's exemplify Aulén's characteristic historical approach. Among these articles, prior to the publication of Christus Victor, are the following noteworthy contributions: "Sekelskiftets teologien återblick", (1925), dealing with shifts in theological trends at the turn of the century; "Den

evangeliska teologiens tvänne huvudskeden och vår tid," (1926), which discusses evangelical thought in the periods of Lutheran Orthodoxy and of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; "Den teologiska krisen i nutiden," (1927), revealing Aulén's theological response to such questions as the humanized God-picture, monism, innerworldliness, and anthropocentricity; "Det teologiska nutidsläget," (1929), containing Aulén's review of the contemporary theological situation and his unique response.⁹⁰ If one attempts to condense Aulén's methodology, principal points of interest, and theological conclusions, then these four articles furnish the core of Aulén's thought. "Det teologiska nutidsläget" is especially illuminating in exhibiting Aulén's reply to the damage wrought by the various "humanized" distortions regarding: the God-picture ("Den humaniserade gudsbilden"), the concept of sin ("Det humaniserade syndbegreppet"), the salvation idea ("Den humaniserade frälsningstanken"), the Christ-image ("Den humaniserade Kristusbilden"), and the kingdom of God ("Det humaniserade gudsriket").⁹¹ These theological writings manifest the direction of Aulén's thinking in the period preceding Christus Victor.

It is true to say that Aulén's theological productions up until the late 1950's are dominated essentially by a strong historical structure. Later, a shift occurs, both in format and in subject matter, because of Aulén's own progression and his response to developments in the theology

around him. While Aulén's historical base appears developed differently and less formalized in such works as Drama and the Symbols and Kristen gudstro i förändringens värld, nevertheless, the underlying essence is still rooted in an analysis of Christian history.

For the Christus Victor presentation, therefore, Aulén's unwavering historical emphasis prompts him to evaluate developments in the various periods of Christian thought. It also leads him to a decisive rejection of the soteriological distortions of Lutheran Orthodoxy and subsequent theology. In a genuine way, the Olaus Petri lectures convey Aulén's reaction to his own evangelical heritage in the question of Christ's saving work. Christus Victor unambiguously reveals the firm historical orientation of its author.

Exploring the different Christian epochs, Aulén poses the necessary questions, investigates the various motifs, and seeks to elucidate the essence of Christian faith. What one recognizes then is Aulén's own use of motivforskning. In 1930, the same year as the Olaus Petri lectures, Aulén contributed to the Svensk teologisk kvartalskrift, "Motiv och föreställning inom teologien," which describes the motif-search and the form representations involved in the process.⁹² Aulén's article coincided with Nygren's publication of Part I of Den kristna kärlekstanken genom tiderna. Eros och agape, also in 1930. Hence, Aulén shows himself aware of his fellow professor's motivforskning

development and utilizes the method. Christus Victor, therefore, must be understood as a unique application to soteriology of the motivforskning process by the historically astute Aulén.

Writing in "Motiv och föreställning inom teologien," the author gives a vivid indication of the importance of the dramatic-dualistic aspect. He observes that not only is this factor to be found overall in early Christian literature, but also that such dualism is expressed in demonic form: "Detta dualistiska motiv är här klätt i en demonologisk föreställningsdräkt."⁹³ He mentions approvingly Professor Anton Fridrichsen's telling statement that "Jesus has actualized Satan as he has actualized God."⁹⁴ Fridrichsen's scriptural study led him to affirm the decisive and necessary role of the evil powers opposed to Jesus.

Fridrichsen summarized his ideas in the Svensk teologisk kvartalskrift in an article entitled "Jesu kamp mot de urene ånder."⁹⁵ Aulén certainly was aware of Fridrichsen's vivid presentation since he was the editor-in-chief of the teologisk kvartalskrift at the time; and, originally, Fridrichsen's comments were delivered in a lecture sponsored by the theological society at Lund on November 9, 1929. The dualistic-demonic evaluation of Jesus' ministry presented by Fridrichsen provided a corroboratory influence for Christus Victor; Aulén explicitly discusses Fridrichsen's concepts in the book.⁹⁶

Analyzing Jesus' exorcisms in the Gospel accounts, Fridrichsen speaks of the uniqueness involved in the proclamation of the divine presence:

But we may, with complete certainty, assume that for Jesus himself the meeting with the demoniacs and the experience of his power over the unclean spirits must have been of great import. His other "mighty works," the healings, had always formed part of the endowment of a prophet, as direct manifestations of a power given by God. The power of exorcism was different....He must have regarded his power over the unclean spirits as an important element in his proclamation of the nearness of the Kingdom of God....⁹⁷

Such a theological position bespeaks a stark dualism at the center of the Gospel account of Jesus' self-awareness:

He had a strong sense of the presence of a superhuman, evil power, hostile to God, with enormous resources, in continual warfare with him, and determined to work his destruction. Traces of this consciousness are to be found all through the gospel tradition. The narrative of the temptation at the opening⁹⁸ of his Messianic activity strikes this note.

Examining the struggle-victory concept, Fridrichsen inspects among other passages, John's idea of the "lifting-up" as a "glorification" (John 12:31-32), Mark's contention of Christ's self-offering as a ransom (Mark 10:45), and the statement about the binding of the Strong One (Mark 3:27).⁹⁹ He asserts three consequences which cohere essentially with Aulén's Christus Victor lectures:

1. the idea of resurrection and exaltation does not fall directly in line with the ransom concept of Mark 10:45; therefore, "probably the oldest interpretation of Jesus' death is that the death is the victory; the resurrection (glorification)

comes as the reward, the seal, the completion, the manifestation of the result";¹⁰⁰

2. the notion of Christ's victory over Satan continued to live in the popular imagination, only appearing rarely in literature, but serving as the ground for the exorcistic practice of the Church; a variation of this popular conception may be detected in the idea of Jesus' victorious descent to Hades;¹⁰¹
3. there is a "double-sidedness" of activity and passivity in the passion of Jesus; it is a passio and an actio reflecting the "antinomy of life itself."¹⁰²

Professor Fridrichsen's investigation bolsters Aulén's already intense displeasure with the monistic, evolutionary theological concepts common to the time. Aulén's insistent dualistic emphasis in Christus Victor concurs with Fridrichsen's exposition of the demonic power opposed to Jesus.¹⁰³

The invitation to deliver the Olaus Petri lectures in Spring, 1930 at Uppsala provided Aulén with the opportunity to elucidate formally ideas that were already part of his thinking.¹⁰⁴ In 1927, he published his analysis of gudsbilden, the God-picture in Christian history, Den kristna gudsbilden genom seklerna och i nutiden: en konturteckning. An essentially allied question relevant to any investigation of the God-image is the soteriological

problem. Aulén's acute exploration of Christ's work flows concretely from his consideration of the various distortions and aberrations in the God-picture throughout the various Christian eras. What Aulén, or anyone else, says about the image of God holds equally true for what God accomplishes in Christ for mankind's salvation. Aulén acknowledges this intimate link: "Christus Victor gives in pointed phrases a sketch of the history of the doctrine of the atonement. Three main types are specified. The ultimate difference between them lies in their images of God."¹⁰⁵ Den kristna gudsbilden, which contains in a clear fashion Aulén's basic theological perceptions, prepares the ground for a detailed study of atonement along historical lines.

Aulén explicates his ideas on the connection between the God-image and Christ in an article in the Svensk teologisk kvartalskrift appearing in the same year (1927) as the larger treatment. In "Gudsbilden och Kristus: en studie om urkristendomens gränslinjer," he discusses that question from the viewpoint of early Christianity.¹⁰⁶ Here Aulén asserts the centrality of the God-picture as not just a "dogmatic locus" for analysis, but as a fundamental outlook in which other concepts can be evaluated.¹⁰⁷ All of Christian history, Aulén insists, is in the deepest theological sense, gudsbildens historia.¹⁰⁸ Treating of Paul's thoughts on the cross as the sign of God's special agape, Aulén identifies God's self-giving love with the

atonement achieved by the crucified Jesus.¹⁰⁹ God not only initiates this divine deed, but also his loving power continues throughout its completion. The God-action of Jesus' cross ("Korsets gudshandling") specifies the inner essence of the gudsbilden.¹¹⁰

That Aulén's thoughts were moving in the direction of a formal atonement study is supported by the fact that in the year following Den kristna gudsbilden, Aulén published an article on the atonement motif found in Christian history, "Försoningsmotivet inom den kristna idéhistorien."¹¹¹ In this writing, he undertakes a historical sketch similar to the extended one in Christus Victor; he classifies the atonement motifs into two types: den grekiska (type 1) and den latinska (type 2).¹¹² With precision, he employs this typ categorization in criticizing the Anselmian and Lutheran Orthodoxy atonement presentations.

Along these lines, Aulén extols Luther as displaying the conflict-victory motif: "Luthers karakteristiska tema är kamp-och segermotivet."¹¹³ Aulén discusses the inner connection between Christology and the atonement motif ("sammanhang mellan kristologin och försoningsmotivet") and the point that God has revealed himself as the God of atonement: "Den Gud, som 'uppenbarar sig' är Försoningens Gud."¹¹⁴ Conveying the notion that revelation consists of and continues in atonement,¹¹⁵ Aulén's thoughts repeat the deepest sentiments of Söderblom. Aulén's 1928 article

traces the chief problems involved with the försoningsmotivet in Christian history and is a concise outline of that which follows in the Olaus Petri lectures of 1930.

Another pertinent writing by Aulén in this period is a 1930 contribution to the Svensk teologisk kvartalskrift, "Adertonhundratalets kristologiska brytningar och nutiden," analyzing the Christology of the nineteenth century.¹¹⁶ Aulén surveys the difference between Protestant Orthodoxy and the "humanizing" theology of this century.¹¹⁷ His evaluation of how the nineteenth century in seeking a new approach to Jesus and his genuine teaching produced a humanized Christ-picture reflects Aulén's treatment in both Den kristna gudsbilden and Christus Victor.

Gustaf Aulén's contributions to the Svensk teologisk kvartalskrift during this period demonstrate that his theology was definitely moving toward a formally explicit soteriological presentation. In many ways, Christus Victor gathered together and solidified Aulén's fundamental theological ideas. His firm historical foundation provided the framework in which the theologian's soteriology could be expressed. However, Aulén's thinking on Christ, atonement, and reconciliation are evident earlier as well, even though his format is not specifically historical.

Våra tankar om kristus (Our Thoughts Concerning Christ) published by Aulén in 1921 illustrates the general lines which later emerge in Christus Victor.¹¹⁸ Aulén

discusses faith in the context of the living, revealing God;¹¹⁹ he draws the necessary connection between Christ's life work and his personhood.¹²⁰ Aulén indicates that Christ's work possesses an objective and a subjective side in a proper sense;¹²¹ nevertheless, it is God's love which finally achieves his unique victory over evil.¹²² In words foreshadowing the same assertion found in The Drama and the Symbols forty-five years later, Aulén declares that Christ's conflict, struggle and victory over evil are God's very own.¹²³ Not only does Aulén retain his fundamental outlook over the years, but also the reader notices almost the identical terms of expression.

Probing the influences proximate to Gustaf Aulén's Olaus Petri lectures, one cannot overlook the significant place of Ragnar Bring's Dualismen hos Luther.¹²⁴ E.M. Carlson describes Bring's study as containing "the results of extensive investigation carried on under Aulén's direction and in close collaboration with him."¹²⁵ Aulén himself cites Bring specifically in Christus Victor, referring to Dualismen hos Luther as "carefully documented, and fixing with precision what Luther actually said on the subject; it has the further merit of interpreting Luther's teaching on the atonement in relation to his teaching as a whole."¹²⁶

Bring observes that his study of Luther's dualism has its origin in the current Swedish systematic approach to theological problems;¹²⁷ hence, from its inception, Bring's

treatment relates intimately to what Aulén and Nygren have effected at Lund.

Bring's analysis stands as a detailed intensification of areas already exposed by Aulén. The author surveys Luther's dualism in relation to: atonement, the conflict with the tyrants over man, satisfaction terminology, law and grace, God's wrath, and the God-picture. Aulén's comments in Christus Victor are conversible with the description of Luther proposed by Bring. Especially noteworthy in relation to Aulén's Luther consideration in the Olaus Petri lectures are Bring's descriptions of the following: the struggle with mankind's opponents ("Kampen mellan Kristus och tyrannerna"),¹²⁸ satisfaction in Luther's terms ("Satisfaktionstanken och Luthers syn på försoningen"),¹²⁹ and the victory over the law ("Lagens övervinnande").¹³⁰ Aulén's awareness of Bring's incisive interpretation is apparent from Aulén's review of the work in the Svensk teologisk kvartalskrift in 1930.¹³¹

Reading Aulén's evaluation of Dualismen hos Luther, one recognizes the close interrelationship of the Luther interpretation presented by both Lundensians. Aulén accentuates Bring's emphasis on the victory motif of the early Church,¹³² Luther's inclusion of the law and God's wrath with the tyrants,¹³³ and the point that Luther's use of satisfaction terminology differs from the traditional one.¹³⁴ Luther's dualism and his God-picture signify themes important for Bring and for Aulén as well.¹³⁵

Aulén's presentation of the Olaus Petri lectures points clearly to a noteworthy, shared influence coming from the perceptive Luther analysis of Ragnar Bring. While Aulén's Christus Victor embodies his own special thinking, these lectures reflect likewise an application of the theological insights shared by these two Swedish colleagues. To read Christus Victor is to re-enter the creative stream of Swedish theology during this fruitful era.

C. Christus Victor: the theme in varied contexts

Gustaf Aulén's exposition of the classic atonement idea received wide attention with the various publications of the lectures subsequent to 1930. In addition, the Christus Victor theme not only became identified with Aulén, but likewise functioned integrally in other works by him. A sample of several publications enables the observer to discern how and to what extent a Christus Victor soteriology marks Aulén. Four theological areas serve to illustrate this integration: revelation, law, Eucharist, and ecclesiology. The four representative works are: 1. Aulén's article on "Revelation" which appeared in the collection edited by John Baillie and Hugh Martin (1937), and which depicts Aulén in the period of the 1930's soon after the Olaus Petri presentation; 2. Aulén's Hewett Lectures delivered in the United States in 1947, published as Church, Law and Society, which conveys Aulén's thinking

on "law" and characterizes him in the post-Nazi period; 3. Eucharist and Sacrifice (1956) treating of Eucharist with emphasis on a theme of victory; and 4. Reformation and Catholicity (1959) which provides a cohesive study of ecclesiology. These later works not only portray Aulén's thinking in the 1950's, but according to Per Erik Persson, manifest a distinct change in Aulén's disposition toward the historical ministry of Jesus.¹³⁶ In these decades, the Hewett Lectures and the books on Eucharist and Church constituted Aulén's most notable published writings until the appearance of The Drama and the Symbols in 1965.

a. Revelation

In 1937, as then the Bishop of Strängnäs, Gustaf Aulén contributed an article to a collection entitled Revelation.¹³⁷ The composition exhibits the principal theological interests enunciated by Aulén in this period. Many of these ideas contain and develop the fundamental lines of the Christus Victor work.

Aulén insists that "revelation must always be connected with the activity of God...."¹³⁸ The emphasis on revelation and on God's deeds reflects Aulén's link with Nathan Söderblom and Einar Billing. Hence, for Aulén the God of Christian faith is active and vital. In the initial comments of the essay, Aulén manifests his Lundensian background concerning theology's purpose vis-à-vis the credibility of Christianity by stating:

"...the best and at bottom the only effective apology [for Christian faith] is the Christian message itself."¹³⁹

In a unique methodological move, Aulén employs the theme of conflict in reviewing several decisive crises in Christian history: the conflict in early Christianity with Hellenistic mystery cults, in the Reformation, and in the period of the vague idealistic religiosity of the post-Enlightenment.¹⁴⁰ All of these critical situations, Aulén declares, show that Christianity had to struggle with religious syncretism of differing forms.¹⁴¹ One recognizes that Aulén has taken the conflict motif and employed it in his historical analysis. And there can be no mistake in identifying Aulén's basic conflict/struggle notion when he suggests: "Christianity has indeed always had to fight for its existence: for there is always opposition to overcome."¹⁴² Likewise, the concept of religious syncretism displeases Aulén since he upholds the point that only God himself reveals and only God himself saves. It is precisely this kind of religious syncretism, which does damage to the primary position of God in atonement, that Aulén has found objectionable in the Latin and subjective views of atonement. The classic idea leaves no room for such syncretism. Along these lines, he displays a negative attitude toward the events of the 1930's in Germany by focusing attention on the "religiosity of man's self-glorification" as "the great enemy of Christianity."¹⁴³

In treating of the Incarnation and its role in the revelation process, Aulén speaks of revelation's "universal and exclusive" qualities. Here again, the "double-sidedness" characteristic of Aulén's method plainly appears; a "double-sidedness" which "cannot be removed through the compromises which a scholastic or idealistic theology has tried to make."¹⁴⁴ And further explicating the concept of revelation in history, Aulén observes: "History is a drama, the arena of conflict between the will of God and this opposed will."¹⁴⁵ The dialectic relationship between the Old and New Testament likewise conveys a sense of drama, struggle and triumph. He states: "'The new' is chiefly seen in his work, in his victory over the powers of evil, in the new Covenant that he brings and through which a new age has begun."¹⁴⁶ History as drama; salvation as achieved through conflict in a dualistic framework; "double-sidedness" as a vehicle for approaching the various religious paradoxes; these principal points stand out in Aulén's essay just as in the Christus Victor work. The author describes the relationship of the Testaments with terms such as "fulfillment and transformation."¹⁴⁷ And most certainly, Söderblom's voice is heard again distinctly, when Aulén in speaking of the New Testament proposes: "His [God's] claims on man have not diminished but increased. His severity is not weakened but intensified."¹⁴⁸

While Aulén's special topic in this essay is God's self-revelation, his treatment culminates in those sections exploring resurrection and forgiveness. This bears particular interest since a cursory glance at Christus Victor might suggest an emphasis on Christ's struggle with the hostile powers to the neglect of the resurrection and its effects. On this point, Aulén cannot be more succinct: "...Christianity was born with the faith in the resurrection and ...the resurrection is the focus in which the whole original Christian faith centers."¹⁴⁹ Developing his assertion, Aulén joins revelation and Christ's victory over death. This connection openly extends the Christus Victor theme to God's self-revelation: "The resurrection says that the revelation of God in Christ is a conflict against the powers of evil and that this conflict ended in victory."¹⁵⁰ The pattern of struggle-victory serves an interpretive function in understanding revelation. Aulén refers to Jesus' ministry and his power to cast out demons, insisting that "religious dualism" provides the background of the New Testament idea of salvation.¹⁵¹ In his essay, Aulén illustrates the integral unity of Christ's death and resurrection, a point that some might feel is not sufficiently stressed in the original Christus Victor treatment. Here Aulén brings the two intimately together: "The cross is immediately and inseparably connected with the resurrection, and draws therefrom its significance as the cross of salvation. The cross does not stand as an isolated

fact."¹⁵² And at this observation he challenges Anselm's presentation, contending that "the resurrection has for his theory only a secondary importance."¹⁵³ While Aulén's criticism of Anselm in this context is general in scope, it receives some support from the fact that in the Cur Deus Homo, the resurrection is not discussed.

When Aulén links together revelation and resurrection, he specifically rejects two distinct views of the kingdom of God.¹⁵⁴ First, he disputes all evolutionary ideas of the kingdom. One understands why he is bound to do so: such a position jeopardizes the free activity of God and the whole hermeneutic of "religious dualism" and struggle which essentially determines Aulén's theological perspective. Second, he casts aside those ideas of the kingdom which speak in metaphysical categories of its eschatological character and thus separate the kingdom from the real world. Obviously, Aulén's thinking mirrors the Lundensian distrust of metaphysics as sterile and inefficacious in regard to life's realities.

Aulén goes on further to speak of resurrection as joined to sacrifice and forgiveness. While not using the term, he treats of a vicarious sacrifice made by God himself as highlighted in II Cor. 5:19. Aulén insists that even though Christ sacrifices himself "on behalf of mankind," "at the same time" and "in the first place" it is an offering made by the love of God.¹⁵⁵ The primary position in atonement belongs always to God, not to man. Once more the observer easily notices Aulén's use of a "simultaneity" ("at

the same time" - gleichzeitig - på samma gång) in exposing a religious fact or truth.¹⁵⁶

Bearing the utmost importance for Aulén's soteriological presentation is the necessary question: to what does the victory of Christ lead? What meaning do resurrection and Christ's victory over death convey to mankind? Aulén's response centers on the new life of forgiveness. Atonement brought into the present is justification; and for Aulén justification consists in the forgiveness of our sins.¹⁵⁷ Aulén affirms:

For the original Christian view of the resurrection cannot be thus put aside. It stands as inseparably connected with the sacrifice; it reveals Christ as Victor over the destroying powers of sin and death. It is at the same time communion with God through forgiveness and life from the life of God.¹⁵⁸

Aulén deems it absolutely essential to see such a positive outcome of Christ's struggle against the hostile powers: a new life in God achieved through the forgiveness accomplished by God's love in Jesus. In this sense, Christ's victory manifests itself as the source of new life for all ages.

In section IV of "Revelation," Aulén elucidates how and in what sense Christ's victory perdures. He expresses himself clearly:

The forgiveness of sins is the permanent work of Christ, through which he realizes his victory in human hearts. This forgiveness then signifies that man is established in the new Covenant, it means that the bands of communion between God and man, which had been broken, are joined again. A new relation of confidence is established.¹⁵⁹

Speaking of this new life achieved in forgiveness, Aulén describes it as a "real communion" between God and man which entails "sanctification" and "service."¹⁶⁰ Aulén treats of sanctification and service in regard to human activity and responsibility, which cannot be abandoned or destroyed.¹⁶¹ His words take on added significance given the time this essay was published and the subsequent events in Europe.

The final section of Aulén's analysis examines love: "All that the Christian faith has to say about the revelation of God is summed up in God's love: God is love. Faith cannot say anything about God that is not a statement about his love."¹⁶² Suggesting that God's love "has often been interpreted in a shallow way,"¹⁶³ Aulén insists that it must be comprehended "as it is revealed in the life and work of Christ."¹⁶⁴ The author sees God's love as "spontaneous and sacrificing" without regard for the "value of its object" and truly possessing the character of gratia praeveniens.¹⁶⁵ This divine love is embodied in the two sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist:

Baptism is the sacrament of gratia praeveniens; it is the action of the love of God that seeks us before we seek God; it tells us that this love of God is the only foundation upon which Christian faith and Christian life can build. The Holy Eucharist is the sacrament of suffering and victorious love. We here meet the love that

goes the way of sacrifice unto death, that gives itself for us. But the Holy Eucharist is not only the sacrament of sacrifice. It is at the same time also the sacrament of victory.¹⁶⁶

One recognizes in Aulén's words about Baptism as the sacrament of gratia praeveniens, Einar Billing's strong views in this same direction. And in the comments on Eucharist, Aulén prefigures his later major publication on the subject.

In this 1937 essay, Aulén's chief points of the Christus Victor lectures are applied to revelation and form the basic structure for the presentation. Aulén continues to keep before us his classic idea of Christ's struggle and victory.

b. "The Law of the Creator"

In April and May, 1947, Gustaf Aulén presented the Hewett Lectures in the United States. These lectures, appearing as they did in the immediate post-World War II period, were particularly relevant to the Church's responsibility in human society.¹⁶⁷ Published as Church, Law and Society in 1948, the lectures manifest various significant points relating to Aulén's Christus Victor theme.

To begin with, Aulén considers the "two centrally defective relationships between Protestantism and society: pietism and modernism."¹⁶⁸ The basis for his dissatisfaction with these two directions lies in their inability to confront the actual human situation, either because they mistakenly interpret activity and passivity or

because they espouse "an evolutionist point of view, as a progressive realization of the kingdom of God in this world."¹⁶⁹ Such a position, of course, clashes with the dualistic and dramatic vision of salvation history at the core of Aulén's religious thinking. Likewise, the pietistic attitude and the overly humanizing posture of religious modernism project a syncretistic quality totally unacceptable for Aulén's soteriological view: the sovereignty of God's redeeming love in Christ cannot be jeopardized in any fashion. If pietism and modernism do not adequately answer how the Christian is to fulfill his responsibility before the world, where does a solution lie? The attempt to find such a response must be grounded, Aulén asserts, in a "realistic and radical" procedure which seeks "a new and deeper insight into the intentions of the Reformation" and "a new, fresh and realistic approach to the biblical message."¹⁷⁰ Aulén's statement reinforces the methodology found in Christus Victor.

Following this pattern of thought, Aulén reviews the theological renewal in Sweden at the turn of the century and explicitly lists four contributions of Söderblom and Billing:

- a. salvation as the free and undeserved gift of God's grace, of his agape;¹⁷¹
- b. history as neither an evolution, nor as meaningless; it is a drama where God's agape fights against the evil forces opposed to the

will of God; the evolutionary is replaced by the eschatological;¹⁷²

- c. the "rediscovery" of the Church; the Church is an expression of the spontaneous and universally directed divine agape, the gratia praeveniens, and so a living witness for the always active divine revelation; a continued incarnation of Christ on earth;¹⁷³
- d. a universal perspective to Christianity; God does not only work through the Gospel and the Church; God also works through his law, the Universal Law of the Creator.¹⁷⁴

Concerning this last affirmation, Aulén's words return pointedly to the struggle motif: "When he [God] is acting in history, fighting his enemies by law and judgment, creating order out of chaos, justice out of unrighteousness, then he also uses as his instruments men who don't belong to his Church."¹⁷⁵ This universal perspective finds its basis in Aulén's later explanation of the "Law of the Creator" bringing God's will to pass outside the narrow confines of human limitation. One easily discerns in Aulén's reference to Söderblom and Billing the essential qualities of the Christus Victor exposition: the sovereignty of God's saving love in Christ; history as a dualistic drama; the Church as a continuity of God's self-revelation through the victory over opposition; and the universal perspective of the "Law of the Creator." While these last two points occupy an

integral place in the original Christus Victor of 1930, Aulén expands his thinking concerning them in his later writing. The "Law of the Creator" receives extensive and insightful consideration in Church, Law and Society.

What exactly is Aulén's "Law of the Creator" and how does it relate to the soteriology of the classic type? Aulén argues that beyond the explicit expression of divine revelation in the Gospel and Church, God actively ordains and participates in a purposeful direction for creation. This dimension is eschatological and not evolutionary; it emerges against the background of struggle and victory which gives history its special meaning. Aulén interprets the biblical position:

We must never forget that the New Testament looks upon history as a drama where the battle between God and the dark hostile forces of evil is unceasingly being fought. This fight makes history a meaningful process. In fact, nothing can possibly give a deeper meaning to history.¹⁷⁶

He insists that the victory belongs to God and that it continues onward:

In the fight for the realm of God the decisive victory has been won by Christ....but it does not mean the end of the fight of Christ. He continues his work and his fight against the evil forces in and through his Church.¹⁷⁷

Beyond what forms the New Testament witness, God's struggle and victory find expression in the "Law of the Creator." This "law" serves a positive purpose: "The law then was seen as a dynamis by which God himself fights for 'the good' against the evil forces of the world."¹⁷⁸ Aulén

underlines a positive intent for law in integral relationship with the struggle motif of Christus Victor.

In the discussion, Aulén notes the Pauline teaching concerning the law, and yet Aulén claims:

It is evident that the attitude of the New Testament towards the law is a double-sided one. From one point of view the law has been dethroned....But from another point of view the law remains ⁱⁿ₁₇₉ all its authority and sovereignty.

When St. Paul speaks of the law as an "enemy," Aulén states, it is in the context of law as a way to salvation. Aulén affirms that "as a way of salvation the law has been defeated and abolished through the victory of Christ."¹⁸⁰

However, Aulén carefully constructs his statement: "The law is abolished in loco justificationis, but also only in loco justificationis. Otherwise the law stands holy and firm in its majesty as an expression of the unchangeable will of God himself."¹⁸¹ Aulén refers to the primus usus and secundus usus of the law traditionally and takes the primus usus beyond the confines of human fellowship into a dramatic expression of the struggle motif.¹⁸²

Examining the "Law of the Creator," Aulén relates it to justice: "The law is a force that contests and subdues the destructive forces in humanity and that lays the foundation necessary for maintaining human fellowship, in the first place then, the foundation of justice."¹⁸³ Aware of the term "natural law," Aulén prefers to by-pass this because of its connection with so-called "natural theology," and because of its problematic use in theological

history.¹⁸⁴ For him, this concept of the "Law of the Creator" avoids the aforesaid difficulties and relates more positively to God's direct involvement in creation's fulfillment. Aulén's terminology is more direct, personal and comprehensive. The author furthermore identifies God's justice and love: "The will of God, thus revealed in his law, is nothing but the will of his love....It must be strongly emphasized that here love and justice cannot be separated from each other...."¹⁸⁵ He gives an example for his assertion: "...the justice, embodied in the law of God, is nothing but the actual and realistic care of one's neighbor that is the central meaning of the love in question."¹⁸⁶ This unity of justice and love indicates why Aulén thinks the dichotomy between God's mercy and righteousness in the Latin view of atonement is untenable. Explaining his ideas on the "Law of the Creator" in Church, Law and Society, the perspective in Christus Victor is rendered more comprehensible.

Aulén's understanding of the "Law of the Creator" bespeaks not only the negative stance of opposition to all that thwarts God's creative purpose, but also the positive attitude relating to a true communion in human fellowship.¹⁸⁷ In this context, the law which Aulén discusses is conceived of "as dynamis, as a divine power working in human history, creating order out of chaos, and judging unrighteousness."¹⁸⁸ This "creating order out of chaos" expresses the Christus Victor theme and subsequently

appears in Aulén's further publications. When one realizes the scope of Aulén's consideration of justice, its integral connection to love, and how it relates to God's will for creation, then one can understand more easily why Aulén finds both the Latin view and the subjective type of atonement deficient. Likewise, Aulén's position envisions a unity between religious values and man's responsibility in regard to human society. And Aulén carefully notes that the challenges of human society are not only the problems mankind must face, but also the whole spectrum of the forces of bondage, a "ghastly continuity of evil forces."¹⁸⁹ Despite this, Aulén asserts that the deepest meaning of human history is to be found in the victory of Jesus Christ; the Christus Victor theme is affirmed:

But this meaninglessness is changed to the deepest meaning. That happened when Christ, when divine love acting through him, went straight into the continuity of evil and by vicarious suffering, assumed its heavy burden. Then the apparent defeat became victory. Looking steadfastly at Christus Victor and knowing that he himself will realize his victory in the life of mankind, faith will never cease to find a divine meaning in history.¹⁹⁰

Discussing the "Law of Creation" and Christ's victory, Aulén demonstrates in these lectures a positive personal outcome of his wartime experiences. Göran Bexell indicates likewise that Aulén's progression in this area is due to the influence of research into Luther's concept of law by such figures as Herbert Olsson (Grundproblemet i Luthers socialetik, 1934), Gustaf Törnqvall (Andligt och världsligt

regemente hos Luther, 1940), and of course, Gustaf Wingren.¹⁹¹

Aulén's well-known book, Church, Law and Society continues the basic exposition of Christus Victor and significantly adds to that presentation a clearer understanding of Aulén's unique usage of "Law of the Creator." In this sense, Church, Law and Society plays an important role in filling out Aulén's picture of the classic atonement idea.

c. Eucharist and Sacrifice

Surveying Aulén's theology, Per Erik Persson speaks of a distinct change in Aulén's appreciation for the historical dimension evidenced by certain shifts of emphasis in works published in the 1950's; one such composition is Aulén's Eucharist and Sacrifice.¹⁹² Aulén's purpose in this book is "to shed some light on the modern, ecumenical discussions of the Lord's Supper."¹⁹³ The work achieves the author's stated goal by reviewing the pertinent aspects of the Reformation and New Testament teaching. As Aulén proceeds about his task, the Christus Victor theme surfaces in the treatment.

A clear reference to the motif of struggle and victory occurs as Aulén describes the background of Martin Luther's teaching on Eucharist. The context here is Luther's criticism of those who envision the sacrifice of the Mass as a continuous attempt to propitiate an unreconciled God. Aulén states:

It is necessary at this point to say a few words about the conception of atonement which forms the background of and the basis for Luther's criticism of the eucharistic sacrifice. Luther conceives of Christ's act of atonement from two points of view. It is a struggle against and victory over "demonic forces," and it is also a vicarious sacrifice. The evil powers which are attacked and defeated are, according to Luther, sin, death, the devil, the law and divine wrath. The idea of struggle and victory is everywhere prominent.¹⁹⁴

Referring to Luther's Commentary on Galatians (1535) concerning Galatians 3:10-14, Aulén pinpoints what he believes to be the chief points of Luther's conception: Christ's action is both victory and vicarious sacrifice. He emphasizes that there exists an integral unity between the victory and the self-sacrifice: "The victory is won through suffering and self-oblation."¹⁹⁵ Once more, the gleichzeitig feature of Aulén's thinking stands out; the "dual aspect" quality of his soteriological exposition is likewise apparent:

But the sacrifice, too, has a relationship to the activity of God. Christ offers himself. He goes the way of sacrifice in obedience to his heavenly Father. From this point of view his sacrifice is an offering brought to God. But at the same time the love of the Father is the starting point of the sacrifice that is taking place: "God gave his only Son." He has finished the atonement. The victory has been won. The sacrifice is fulfilled and valid forever.¹⁹⁶

Commenting on Luther's concept of Eucharistic presence, Aulén stresses the integral relationship between the Eucharist and Christ's victory in the resurrection: "Sacrifice and victory belong inextricably together. The sacrifice of Christ in death is victory, the victory that

led to the resurrection."¹⁹⁷ Aulén continues this same thought: "This participation in the sacrifice of Christ which the Eucharist mediates signifies also a participation in the resurrection, and anticipation of the life that is to come."¹⁹⁸ It is Christ himself who offers the sacrifice, who achieves the victory and who alone can effect his presence.¹⁹⁹ The fundamental outline of the Christus Victor theme clearly affects the way Aulén presents Luther's theology of Eucharist in this book.

In chapter ten of Eucharist and Sacrifice, Aulén discusses nineteenth century Eucharistic celebration in the Church in Sweden. He indicates that too much attention was placed on Christ's death and not enough on the active and living Lord. This active presence of the Lord forms another feature of the total scope of Christus Victor. Aulén observes:

To be sure they held with Luther to the real presence in the bread and wine. But they had severed the threads which had tied the real presence to the living and active Lord....When the real presence thus ceased to stand in relationship with the living and active Lord, thinking began to be concerned with the function of bread and wine and what happened to them.²⁰⁰

While Aulén's treatment at this point deliberately looks at Eucharistic celebration, he accentuates the activity and presence of the Lord. Nathan Söderblom's perspective on the living and active God resounds distinctly in Aulén's emphasis.

In chapter twelve of the work, Aulén asserts two major points: the redemptive work of Christ has the character of

completion and yet of continuity; and, this redemptive work embraces the whole earthly life of Christ.²⁰¹ In this latter affirmation, Aulén demonstrates the importance of not disconnecting the death of Christ from the previous ministry.

It is in chapter fourteen of Aulén's Eucharist and Sacrifice that the author's thought reaches a highpoint in regard to his classic soteriological presentation. Here he speaks of the Bible as perceiving "existence in the form of a tremendous drama; its message revolves around that struggle, mirabile duellum, in which God is engaged against all opposition, against hostile powers, and against everything that would enslave humanity."²⁰² Once more, these thoughts resonate with Söderblom's themes: "God is the active, living and dynamic God."²⁰³ There can be no viable understanding of Scripture without recognition of the struggle motif: "This conflict meets us already on the first page of the Bible, and witness to it continues until the last pages of the Book of Revelation. This fundamental perspective reveals the unity and continuity which, in spite of all diversity and dissimilarity, characterizes the biblical message."²⁰⁴

At this critical point, Aulén probes how exactly Christ acts on behalf of God and of enslaved humanity. He delineates a very accurate distinction here that may not be so apparent in the Christus Victor work itself - the victory does not represent the divinity aspect and the sacrifice,

the humanity aspect.²⁰⁵ Such a position does not convey a valid view of redemption and irreparably damages the unity of Christ's person; this stance is soteriologically and Christologically untenable. Once again, Aulén's "at the same time" perspective must be acknowledged: "It is both in his victorious conflict and his sacrifice he acts on behalf of God and on behalf of humanity."²⁰⁶

As Aulén describes the role of God, he presents God as "actively" participating throughout the struggle. This divine participation cannot be limited just to an initiatory act by God but must extend throughout the whole atonement process.²⁰⁷ In this setting, more than anywhere else, Aulén insists that God "gave" Christ even unto death. Aulén boldly declares: "We would not express the whole truth if we said that God simply 'permitted' him to be put to death. He gave himself, and God gave him as a sacrifice."²⁰⁸ In no sense, must God be seen as distancing himself from these events. And Aulén firmly joins atonement and the Incarnation in this context: "The atonement of Christ is altogether a work of God's own love. If we deny this, we must at the same time deny the reality of the Incarnation."²⁰⁹ The heavy emphasis Aulén here places on God's active role serves to intensify the Christus Victor presentation.

Aulén similarly contends that the scriptural view of Christ's sacrifice may be considered in light of such non-biblical terms as "merit" and "satisfaction," but only

if properly understood and interpreted. The author himself attempts to do this when he speaks of the merit of Christ's sacrifice as "the way through which it became possible for God, or through which God made it possible, to create the new situation under the new covenant."²¹⁰ The Latin legalistic notions of atonement terminology find no place in the treatment at hand.

In his book concerning the Eucharist, Aulén has undertaken to present the themes of sacrifice and Christ's redemptive ministry as they pertain to the Eucharistic presence of Christ both in an historical and ecumenical context. By so doing, not only has he employed the Christus Victor theme, but he has once more intensified and moved it forward.²¹¹

d. Reformation and Catholicity

Aulén's stated intention in this 1959 work centers on several of the major points of the Reformation in the hope of aiding the ecumenical conversations between the churches.²¹² As he proceeds, the author reviews various Christological developments and interpretations in the history of Christian doctrine. It is within this setting that the Christus Victor theme emerges once more.

Reformation and Catholicity presents a vigorous case for the integral unity of cross and resurrection. Aulén furthermore underlines the continuity of Christ's salvific work in the Church. Once again, the Christus Victor idea is not narrowed to the events of Good Friday, but extends

itself into the present situation of mankind. Aulén declares:

Everything depends on the sacrifice finished on the cross, because in it is victory and reconciliation. Everything depends on the resurrection, for it is not only the manifestation of the victory but also transition to the never-ceasing, continual work of Christ in the Church.²¹³

Aulén's affirmation stands out distinctly. He also reiterates the inseparability of creation and salvation: "...creation and salvation - the work of God and the work of Christ are inseparably joined."²¹⁴

Persson's memorial article of 1979 specifically indicates Aulén's writings of the late 1950's as signalling a deeper appreciation for the historical ministry of Jesus. Speaking of the faith confession of the Apostles, Aulén emphasizes the relationship of the Church's belief with Jesus' earthly ministry and the self-awareness of his life's mission: "...it had its beginning in the disciples' association with Jesus during his earthly ministry. The beginning of the confession is therefore unquestionably connected with Jesus' own consciousness of his calling, as this was indicated by him and appeared in word and action."²¹⁵

In addition, Aulén's discussion of the relationship between Christ's divinity and humanity in the context of the early Apostolic confession bears significantly upon his entire Christus Victor presentation. He insists that in the early Church "we find a thoroughly integrated point of

view."²¹⁶ The first Christians did not divide the redemptive work of Christ, for just as the "person of Christ was one and indivisible," likewise, "the same holds true in regard to the redemptive work of Christ."²¹⁷ The writer laments that this two-sided unity is lost in scholasticism, and "Anselm's theory of the atonement bears witness to this fact."²¹⁸

Aulén depicts the harmony of the redemptive work in direct reference to the goal of creation as the focal point of unity. Just as God's creative work brings new life and order out of chaos, so too the redemptive mission of Christ continues in the very same direction. Aulén proposes: "Redemption is a work of the God of Creation."²¹⁹ By means of such a statement, the integral unity of Christ's work is not to be understood from the viewpoint of what he does as man or as God, but rather from the sense of identity which stems directly from the purpose of creation. Christ the redeemer continues the work of God the creator. The unity of creation and redemption is dramatized in the struggle waged against all the forces opposed to God's purposes: "What unites them is the struggle against the enemies of humanity - sin, death, and the devil - which Christ waged both on behalf of humanity and on behalf of God, a struggle that led to the cross on which the victory was won."²²⁰ By concentrating on God's purpose as seen in creation and in creation's redemption through Christ, Aulén conveys the integral unity of Christ's work better than in his

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discussions concerning what Christ does qua deus, qua homo.²²¹

In the course of his exposition, Aulén reviews the Chalcedonian Christological formulation in the situation of the Middle Ages. He suggests that this formulation did not determine the theology and piety of this period, but rather that there ensued a struggle between conflicting notions: a. divinity eliminating Christ's humanity; b. "tendencies in which the suffering human being becomes everything."²²² This latter attitude envisions Christ's cross as one of martyrdom but hardly that of victory.²²³ Aulén observes further that while the Chalcedonian formulation "was not able to do everything it was intended to do," nevertheless, its significance is important.²²⁴ The affirmation of the limitedness of theological terminology fits well into Aulén's whole enterprise.

Speaking of Christ's work, Aulén stresses the unity of the Incarnation and atonement. For him and his classic view, the two must be seen in closest relationship, and the Incarnation can never be supposed as a "presupposition for the later act of the atonement."²²⁵ Answering criticism of the Reformation's stance regarding Christ's redemptive work, Aulén reasserts a dual principle: 1. there is no division in Christ's redemptive work regarding humanity and divinity; 2. all "synergistic" interpretations of salvation are excluded.²²⁶ He reflects, "If justification is by grace alone, it is impossible to divide the work of salvation as

partly the work of God and partly the work of man in such a way that they balance one another."²²⁷ And yet even in this, Aulén understands that man is not just an observer:

"By grace alone" does not stand in opposition to human "activity," but to the acquiring of human merits. The reason for this is that the decisive contrast is not between God and man,²²⁸ but between God and "the destructive powers."

Having illustrated this contrast between God and "the destructive powers," Aulén can observe once more, "the only legitimate perspective is the dramatic."²²⁹

In this published work, Aulén repeatedly reviews various essential points of the Christus Victor theme in light of his evaluation of the Reformation and its meaning for the whole Christian Church.

D. Christus Victor Renewed: The Drama and the Symbols (1965)

No comprehensive study of Gustaf Aulén's Christus Victor idea would be adequate without an analytic appraisal of the writing which holds a special place as a renewal of the Olaus Petri lectures, The Drama and the Symbols. Aulén himself appreciated the positive contributions his original presentation had afforded the theological world. At the same time, he realized that certain valid criticisms had been raised over the years concerning his work. In Dramat och symbolerna (The Drama and the Symbols) (1965), Aulén renews the Christus Victor exposition and attempts to clarify the problematic points of the original book. This publication focuses on exploring various images of God, a

discussion which coincided with the "death of God" theological movement of the 1960's. While Aulén relates this effort at studying God-images to a work published early in his career, Den kristna gudsbilden genom seklerna och i nutiden (1927), he likewise considers this present book as a completion and clarification of Christus Victor.²³⁰

Referring to Christus Victor, Aulén remarks in the preface:

For two reasons it is worth commenting on the relation of Christus Victor to the present book; first, because the dominant perspective in the two books is similar; and second, because Christus Victor has been much discussed,²³¹ more widely than I have been able to follow.

Explaining the first part of his statement, Aulén indicates, "This motif, here called the dramatic perspective, is the recurrent theme of this new book. Here it is presented with greater consistency and wider scope."²³² Concerning the criticisms arising from Christus Victor, he underlines the major objections: a. the human side of Christ does not receive due recognition; b. the treatment of redemption doctrine in medieval and post-Reformation scholasticism was unsatisfactory.²³³

In the preface of The Drama and the Symbols, Aulén responds succinctly to these two objections and sees this new writing as clarifying his position. To the first he responds: "In this present book I think the human side of his work will be found to emerge clearly."²³⁴ He reflects that his purpose was "directed against the tendency of scholastic theology to divide up the work of Christ into what he did 'as God' and what he did 'as man'."²³⁵ In

regard to the second, Aulén once more delineates his view of the scholastic doctrine of redemption: "The crux of the matter is that in the very theological structure there was a tendency to rational explanation, a rationalization, which had fatal results for the image of God...."²³⁶ These two areas express the principal criticisms directed against Aulén's original exposition: he does not do justice to the humanity of Christ nor to the medieval presentation. In our present study, one may observe that in the first area, Aulén's position is open to a variety of critiques. On the second point, however, Aulén has clarified the situation: his chief problem is not with the intentions of Anselm, but rather with the theological-rational structure of the Latin type presentations which distorts the New Testament's vision of Christ's saving work, and hence produces a rationalized and unrealistic soteriology.

Norman Hjelm's study of 1960 concludes that Aulén does not do justice to the humanity of Christ;²³⁷ but Aulén's The Drama and the Symbols (1965) and his subsequent works manifest a definite regard for Jesus' humanity. One might conclude that this is a change on Aulén's part; however, it seems more to be a developing appreciation based on Aulén's own progression and sensitivity to developments and movements in the theological world around him. As Birger Gerhardsson states, Aulén never feared to change his mind or position.²³⁸ One can observe Aulén's steady, progressive, maturation somewhat away from the dry style and approach of

his earlier theological publications to the historical appreciation and personal dimension of the writings of the 1960's and 1970's. Nevertheless, in all of this, Aulén maintains a decisive opposition to rationalistic salvation constructs and ideas of God. The Drama and the Symbols holds the key for a fuller understanding of Christus Victor, as well as for seeing Aulén's attitudes and methodology in the latter part of his career.

a. "Derationalizing"

In Aulén's published studies, a constant refrain centers on the fact that Christian faith defies rationalizing structures and often involves religious paradox. Aulén repeats this theme in The Drama and the Symbols. He reflects that religious symbols cannot be seen as rationalizing "adequate concepts," since statements of a rational and metaphysical character fail in conveying the depth of religious meaning.²³⁹ He argues that such is the case in certain approaches to God's omnipotence and in the doctrine of atonement when "people try to make a rational adjustment between God's love and righteousness."²⁴⁰ In this exposition, Aulén considers how God's omnipotence is not to be understood as a type of "all-causality," in which rational compromises or a "modus vivendi" concerning evil must be somehow contrived. For Aulén, such a concession weakens the radical opposition of God to all evil. Rational compromises revolving around how God "consents" to the evil in the world likewise are unacceptable.²⁴¹

While Aulén sincerely values the need for reason and logic in theology - "A theology which finishes up in logical contradiction condemns itself"²⁴² - nonetheless, he understands the damage of that "scholastic theology, both medieval and post-Reformation," which is steeped in rationalizing structures. The utilization of a "merit" scheme in atonement thinking witnesses to a distortion in religious understanding as a result of such rationalization.²⁴³ And because of this rationalizing structure, the power of God's saving love gets lost:

The whole point of the message was lost, that God's forgiving and liberating love is not something that can be rationally calculated, motivated, and explained; a love that "passeth all understanding" is wholly undeserved and in that sense is "paradoxical."²⁴⁴

Aulén speaks convincingly of that "characteristically religious perspective" which must shine forth in genuine theology.²⁴⁵ Hence, there must be a sincere effort at "theological derationalizing" and all avoidance of a tendency toward apologetics.²⁴⁶ Much of Aulén's thought here repeats his earlier theological outlook especially regarding the nature of theological inquiry as expressed in The Faith of the Christian Church.

In relation to soteriology, Aulén summarizes his attitude toward such rationalizing tendencies in scholastic theology and in the Latin type of atonement by stating: "To sum up: sacrificium vicarium is no doubt a key word in the New Testament, but you will search there in vain for satisfactio vicaria."²⁴⁷ For Jesus to offer himself in

vicarious solidarity with sinful mankind as a real sacrifice is proper; the concept of making "satisfaction" according to a rationalized salvation structure cannot be accepted.

As Aulén sees it, religious symbols conveying the paradoxical qualities of the divine mystery remain at the heart of authentic theological pursuit. Aulén speaks of religious symbols, especially concerning Jesus' saving work, in a section entitled "Context of Meaning" in The Drama and the Symbols.²⁴⁸

b. "The Drama"

The Drama and the Symbols presents itself as Aulén's major renewal of his original soteriological exposition. The author devotes a large portion of this study to his "dramatic" presentation of redemption and focuses attention on God-image, symbol, and drama. Aulén's soteriology consistently highlights a God who is actively involved in man's struggle against all the forces of bondage. Aulén declares: "Action versus opposition equals drama."²⁴⁹ Furthermore, he underlines the integral connection between what God does in Christ and how it affects Christianity's view of God: "By this the Christian image of God is inseparably linked with, and qualitatively determined by, the drama of Christ."²⁵⁰

In this book, Aulén expresses keen interest in the earthly ministry of Jesus and asserts that Western theology, both Roman Catholic and post-Reformation, and the currents of pietism and mysticism tended to concentrate on the

passion of Christ to the neglect of the earthly ministry and the resurrection-exaltation.²⁵¹ Similarly, nineteenth century liberal theology placed a great but one-sided emphasis on the earthly ministry, especially the preached message of Jesus.²⁵² Aulén wishes to affirm that an essential unity exists among what he terms the "three great acts of the drama" - the earthly ministry, the passion and death, the resurrection and exaltation.²⁵³ To do otherwise is to "deradicalize" the Gospel and to "dedramatize" God's saving love.²⁵⁴

Aulén realizes the difficulty inherent in the divine-human work of Christ and how "people have tried to separate what Christ did 'as God' from what he did 'as man'."²⁵⁵ Along these lines, he reflects that "it is not always that theology talks as frankly and realistically about the humanity of Jesus as the Bible does."²⁵⁶ Jesus' personal sufferings, the confrontations with the evil spirits, and his acting with unique authority provide insight for understanding the person of Christ. Aulén considers the parables as expressions of the "radical" nature of Christ's work.²⁵⁷ This "radical" character of the redemptive drama leads up to the crucifixion and resurrection which Aulén terms "one inseparable unit" - "They belong together, not just that one is added to the other on some sort of a plus b formula."²⁵⁸ In his study of Aulén, Benkt-Erik Benktson speaks of this same integral and

functional soteriological unity as "eine unteilbare Einheit."²⁵⁹

Interpreting Christ's atoning actions, Aulén claims that Jesus accomplishes his purpose in obedience to God and at the same time in solidarity with mankind.²⁶⁰ Here again, Aulén's theological approach conveys a "dual aspect" quality regarding the meaning of a divine action. He illustrates this point employing various expressions: "...in the light of Easter, [Christ's death] was a victory - a victory that was Christ's own victory and at the same time God's victory over the anti-God powers."²⁶¹ Aulén's use of such "dual aspect" method characterizes a great deal of his theological undertaking.

Aulén examines the proposition that Western theology failed to keep the cross and exaltation together as did primitive Christianity. He asserts that both passion mysticism and the Enlightenment theology signified reactions to this distortion.²⁶² In the twentieth century, Aulén considers his own Swedish colleagues as presenting a renewed appreciation for the depth of Christ's saving activity. On this point, he specifically praises Einar Billing's Försoningen (1908) for two significant contributions: "the strong note of drama" and "the strong emphasis on the resurrection."²⁶³ Also, he heartily approves Nathan Söderblom's conception of God as "suffering and fighting" and hence, of God as not apart from but rather intimately involved in the salvation struggle.²⁶⁴ Aulén cites the

famous lines of Erik Gustaf Geijer's Swedish poem: "Nothing is left unwon, By Love that suffers."²⁶⁵

As a consequence of these thoughts, Aulén elucidates the connection between exaltation and the role of the living Christ in the Church.²⁶⁶ For Aulén, a valid ecclesiology must be rooted in the active, salvific presence of Christus Victor in the Church which, nonetheless, still must confront the powers opposed to God.²⁶⁷

In this study, Aulén speaks of "three acts in this drama": Jesus' earthly life; his suffering and death; his resurrection and exaltation.²⁶⁸ He underscores the integral unity of these as "one indivisible whole" in relation to the salvific work of God through Christ.²⁶⁹ Here there stands a special regard for the earthly ministry of Jesus which may not seem so clear in Aulén's previous presentations.

Following this trend of thought, Aulén warns of

"dedramatizing" the whole by an exclusive emphasis on Jesus' earthly ministry which fails to value Jesus' confrontation with the forces of bondage in his passion and death.²⁷⁰

Once again, Aulén endorses the struggle notion of Christus Victor which cannot lose sight of "the harsh conditions in which this love has to battle, and consequently also of its radical opposition to evil, to the destructive forces in creation...."²⁷¹ The author balances this observation with his objection to redemption presentations which center on "satisfaction" or rational compromises: "...this whole concept involves a deradicalizing of the radical gospel."²⁷²

For Aulén, the victory of Christ is achieved in a dramatic and radical fashion where the cross "is something more than merely a cross of martyrdom."²⁷³ He readily acknowledges the uniqueness of Christ's sacrificial love which is intimately linked to the who and how of Christ's struggle:

A God who merely suffers would be no God.²⁷⁴

For Christian faith, what happened on the cross was not just a tragedy....But what links Christian faith to the cross is not that a martyr died there, but the assurance that Christ's death was his victory - and God's victory.²⁷⁵

Bringing these events into the present, the Church, Aulén asserts, carries out Christ's "life-giving work in battle with all that destroys and damages life."²⁷⁶ It can do so, he affirms, because "the active presence of Christ in his Church is a presence in and through the Spirit."²⁷⁷ This direct relationship of the continuous nature of Christ's struggle in the Church with the Spirit finds clear expression in The Drama and the Symbols. Certainly, Aulén has exposed this point as an integral and logical development of a Christus Victor soteriology. By recognizing the role of the Spirit in Christ's exaltation, soteriology and ecclesiology exhibit a central focus point. The Spirit enables man to be "involved" in the struggle and in the victory.²⁷⁸ For the author, this concept of being involved is linked to the essence of faith: "...faith in the Christian sense is to be involved."²⁷⁹ Because this "involvement" relates to struggle, it entails an element of "risk"; nevertheless, as it connects with Christ's victory,

the quality of confidence accompanies it.²⁸⁰ Aulén's reflections along these lines manifest a style and emphasis different from his earlier presentations.

The final section of Aulén's The Drama and the Symbols bears the heading "The Drama of Christ and the Image of God." Here Aulén reviews his outstanding ideas. These can be summarized as follows:

- a. "in the New Testament Christ and his work are viewed from a double aspect" - as truly human and yet as truly Kyrios;²⁸¹
- b. "docetic" tendencies arose with the result that a separation was predicated concerning what Christ did qua deus and qua homo;²⁸²
- c. "the main point of this is that we have here a unitary and indivisible life's work, and that this has to be seen from a double aspect: as a human work and as a divine work";²⁸³
- d. "the sacrifice of Jesus, as a human action, is determined by obedience to God and by solidarity with man";²⁸⁴
- e. Jesus overcame the anti-God powers and brought forgiveness "not as an act of 'fairness,' but as inseparably linked with 'righteousness' and radical judgment of sin";²⁸⁵
- f. at the same time, this redemptive work is a divine action whereby God does not stand apart but "is

actively engaged in what is going on...God enters the hand-to-hand battle...";²⁸⁶

- g. reconciliation is achieved by the "restoration of a fellowship which has been broken";²⁸⁷
- h. reconciliation must be seen from a "double aspect" as a reality, a fact and as something which is continuously going on;²⁸⁸
- i. the image of God is revealed in the Christ drama;²⁸⁹
- j. the Incarnation of Christ and the work of Christ as truly salvation/reconciliation cannot be disjoined;²⁹⁰
- k. "the God of creation and the God of salvation are one and the same."²⁹¹

It may well be the case that in this last principal assertion, one finds a better and more concise approach to the persistent questions concerning the unity of the divine redemptive action. How is it that God saves us? How can the saving work be seen qua deus, qua homo? While Aulén has provided explanations in his other books, the statement here in The Drama and the Symbols presents the clearest answer: the God of creation and of salvation are one; creation and salvation have the same meaning and purpose.²⁹² To understand one is to know the other: "The origin, meaning, and purpose of creation are revealed in the work of salvation that God effects in and through Christ."²⁹³ In this sense, Christus Victor speaks not only of redemption

from bondage but of the very intention and loving care of the Creator from the beginning.

c. The Drama and the Symbols: its significance

In summary, The Drama and the Symbols occupies a place of central importance in Aulén's theological career. As he himself relates, it joins together his previous treatments concerning the image of God and salvation ideas. Although its format and style are different, one recognizes the book as a renewal of the basic thrust of the original Christus Victor presentation. While Aulén is aware of the criticism directed against the weak points of his exposition, he basically maintains his original position without significant changes. One may observe the principal alteration to be a shift in the style and tone of the presentation. Now, the treatment exhibits less emphasis on historical-theological development and more concern with religious questions bearing relevance to the present. Here too Aulén displays a genuine appreciation for the earthly ministry of Jesus; he likewise strengthens the link between creation and salvation in the redemption scheme. In this way, The Drama and the Symbols answers such criticism as expressed by Norman Hjelm's 1960 study concerning Aulén's lack of sufficient worth for the creation aspect and a deficiency regarding the value of Christ's humanity.²⁹⁴

It may be worthwhile to note that Aulén does not change at any one point or moment in his essential soteriological position; the major shift seems to be what

Per Erik Persson observed - a greater appreciation for the historical dimension as regards Jesus himself.²⁹⁵ It is as if Aulén has freed himself from the narrow restrictions of his theological background and formation which did indeed look with suspicion at the historicizing tendencies of the turn of the century. And yet even here there arises a problem. While Aulén's methodology manifests an anti-historical slant vis-à-vis the historicizing tendencies of the turn of the century, he, nevertheless, follows the Swedish historical-systematic method in the initial treatment of Christus Victor. The emphasis, of course, lies with the systematic evaluation of the historical evidence. Yet by the time Aulén presents The Drama and the Symbols that very same historico-systematics is used in the context of a greater appreciation for the earthly Jesus. What we see is a two-fold situation in Aulén's work:

1. a historico-systematic methodology which steers clear of attempts to regain the "historical" Jesus;
2. a later development in the direction of a less abstract, more contemporary theology with a substantial regard for the "earthly" Jesus ("jordelivets Jesus").²⁹⁶

The fear and suspicion concerning the "historicizing" and "liberalizing" of the Gospel message of salvation apparent in Aulén's earlier career has faded. The Drama and the Symbols signifies such a progression in Aulén's thought.

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This appreciation for the earthly person and ministry of Jesus amplifies the Christus Victor theme of Gustaf Aulén's theology.

E. The "Earthly" Jesus

a. Jesus in Contemporary Historical Research

In the foreword to the 1976 English edition of Jesus i nutida historisk forskning - Jesus in Contemporary Historical Research, Aulén states that his intention in this book is to survey several recent authors in their historical presentation of Jesus.²⁹⁷ This work signifies a notable new direction for Aulén whose earlier theological explorations tended to shun such an approach to the figure of Jesus. Such avoidance was part of Aulén's theological formation with its inherent fear that historical approaches ultimately led to a sterile historicism and thus compromised both the message of Christ and its acceptance in faith. Here he manifests that he is no longer hampered by such misgivings. Aulén candidly remarks: "Jesus is a central figure in the history of mankind and it therefore remains a most important question whether historical-critical scholarship can give us trustworthy knowledge about him."²⁹⁸ Aulén indicates that his review concerns works published since 1960 by authors such as C.H. Dodd, Herbert Braun, Joachim Jeremias, W.D. Davies and Birger Gerhardsson. In reading Aulén's presentation, one readily recognizes how some of the

opinions of these selected authors converge with Aulén's own Christological views.

Aulén begins his treatment with a reference to the "earthly" Jesus; for him this term avoids some of the negative connotations connected with the expression, the "historical" Jesus.²⁹⁹ He quickly indicates that such a research attempt must give due recognition to the "demonic" and "dualistic-antagonistic" background of the New Testament;³⁰⁰ the author notes the importance of Nathan Söderblom and the Norwegian, Anton Fridrichsen in this regard.³⁰¹ Aulén likewise highlights the importance of the apocalyptic for understanding the message and ministry of Jesus.³⁰² It is within this background that Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom is "thoroughly dominated by a radical interpretation of the demand of love."³⁰³ Aulén reflects that "Jesus has sharpened the demand in a way which has no precedent, something which is clearly marked in that love is to include even enemies."³⁰⁴ He goes on to assert: "It is not only a question of acts which are to be carried out, but also of the inner attitude."³⁰⁵ Much of Aulén's review of recent Jesus research centers on the uniqueness of Jesus' "radical demand" and "lavish generosity."³⁰⁶ These facts of Jesus' ministry are exemplified in Jesus' activity and in the parables he employs.³⁰⁷

Aulén concurs with the assertion that the kingdom of God "is conceived of as something dynamic - one cannot speak of this 'kingdom' without immediately thinking of God's

activity and his 'deeds'." ³⁰⁸ He asserts that the kingdom of God is engaged in an "eschatologically decisive struggle." ³⁰⁹ Jesus is the central figure in a "war" against the reign of Satan who "stands as the representative of the collective power of evil." ³¹⁰ Of course, for Aulén the ultimate victory belongs to Christ. Commenting on J. Jeremias and C.H. Dodd, he repeats the observation that "Jesus did not differentiate between the resurrection, the parousia, the fulfillment, and the new temple; all these expressions confirmed one and the same thing: God's victory." ³¹¹

The writer's appraisal of his selected authors expresses much of his own thinking. In this treatment, Aulén clearly shows his appreciation for the "earthly" Jesus whose person and ministry are intimately bound to the kingdom of God:

The gospel "is not a piece of instructional material that can be separated from the person of Jesus and allowed to function on its own." ³¹²

"he [Jesus] is already the gospel." ³¹³

And in speaking of Jesus' role in bringing the kingdom to man, Aulén remains aware of the fundamental connection between the Father and Son in this dramatic struggle and victory. Repeating his previous concern with the "Law of the Creator," Aulén observes: "It is the will of the Creator for his creation that Jesus wants to reveal when he preaches what it means to 'do the Father's will.'" ³¹⁴ As Aulén utilizes his Christus Victor theme in the later years

of his theological career, the intimate link between redemption and creation becomes evermore prominent.

In this publication, Aulén discusses Jesus' "sacrificial death" in the context of the demonic perspective and apocalyptic imagery of the New Testament period.³¹⁵ He suggests again that "antagonistic" may more accurately describe the situation than "dualistic."³¹⁶ Aulén likewise examines the point that the portrayal of Satan as adversary in the New Testament differs somewhat from how he appears in the Old Testament where "he could be regarded as being in God's service."³¹⁷ He similarly notes that the "omnipotence" of God does not preclude God's actual and direct involvement in the struggle with opposing forces.³¹⁸

Aulén carefully considers Jesus' sacrificial death. While he does not here specifically speak of atonement theories or types, he questions any redemption presentation that entails "redirecting" God:

There was never a question of whether the sacrificial death of Jesus could "redirect" God. Jesus' concern was to remain faithful unto death to the task which God had laid upon him; the sacrifice did not concern God, it concerned man, his "ransom," his liberation from destructive powers, and his fellowship with God.³¹⁹

Following this line of thought, Aulén connects Jesus' sacrifice with the image of God presented by Jesus which signifies the Savior's uniqueness: "Jesus simultaneously tightened up God's demands and with radical generosity demonstrated God's forgiveness. Nothing was more

'characteristic of Jesus than these two apparently contradictory attitudes."³²⁰ Keeping with the tone of previous assertions, Aulén observes that Jesus does not formulate any "concept of God"; instead, Jesus' conduct reveals who God is.³²¹ In a true sense Aulén affirms that Jesus is "the one who reveals and the one who liberates."³²² While this book treats of historical-critical research relating to the "earthly" Jesus, Aulén indicates once again that the final assent to Jesus' victory in the resurrection lies not in the area of historical research but with faith.³²³

The importance of Aulén's Jesus in Contemporary Historical Research for the Christus Victor theme can be summarized:

- a. while the works reviewed and the statements employed belong to other authors, one can easily detect Aulén's concurrence with them;
- b. Aulén's appreciation for the historical dimension as noted by Persson is brought to full play here in Aulén's treatment of the ministry of the "earthly" Jesus in relation to his role as the Victor-Savior;³²⁴
- c. many of Aulén's principal affirmations as found in Christus Victor and The Drama and the Symbols appear here once more;

- d. Aulén manifests a renewed esteem for the person of Jesus and hence the Christus Victor theme is enlarged in this direction;
- e. this work may be seen as a continuation of Aulén's response to those who criticized his apparent lack of regard for Jesus' humanity in his soteriological presentation.

All in all, Aulén's Jesus in Contemporary Historical Research exemplifies his theological attitude in the 1970's and his ever-increasing attempt to present his theological views as relevant to the times.

b. The Markings Connection

In 1969, Gustaf Aulén published his analysis of Dag Hammarskjöld's Markings. This book written in English not only serves as a tribute to Hammarskjöld, but also contains ideas relevant to the Christus Victor theme. While the central focus of Aulén's book is on Hammarskjöld's thoughts, nevertheless, certain pertinent Christological and soteriological points surface. In general, Hammarskjöld's growing appreciation for the humanity of Jesus fits well with Aulén's stance during this period of the 1960's. Reviewing Hammarskjöld's comments, Aulén expresses his own mind in the same direction.

Hammarskjöld considers the sacrifice of Jesus and discusses the "risk" involved; in this context, the humanity of Jesus is highlighted and all docetic views are excluded.³²⁵ Aulén observes that "the significance of sacrifice becomes a main theme in Markings."³²⁶ For

Hammar skjöld, this notion of sacrifice is an action of divine love.³²⁷ Probing the entry in Markings for Good Friday, 1956, Aulén explains that Hammar skjöld sees in this sacrifice the "authentic key to the Incarnation."³²⁸ He discusses Hammar skjöld's quotation from Erik Gustaf Geijer's nineteenth century Passion hymn, "Du bar ditt kors o Jesus mild" ("Thy cross, O Jesus, Thou didst bear") with reference to the phrase "there is nothing that is not won by the love which suffers."³²⁹ Here the author contends that Hammar skjöld is focusing attention on the victory of the suffering love of Christ.³³⁰ Aulén furthermore indicates that Hammar skjöld upholds the validity of a vicarious sacrifice by Christ; this however is not the same as a satisfactio vicaria which is absolutely rejected.³³¹ He later comments that "there is a fundamental difference between satisfactio vicaria and sacrificium vicarium."³³²

Along this same line, Aulén notes that Hammar skjöld joins together the notion of Christ's sacrifice and God's creative purpose and activity.³³³ Jesus' sacrifice must also be judged, states Aulén, from the viewpoint of forgiveness; both are linked together and Aulén restates Hammar skjöld's thought on this relationship:

Forgiveness breaks the chain of causality because he who "forgives" you - out of love - takes upon himself the responsibility for the consequences of what you have done. Forgiveness, therefore, always entails a sacrifice.³³⁴

Employing a style of expression which is evident also in Jesus in Contemporary Historical Research, Aulén following

upon Hammarskjöld describes Jesus as one who "not only encounters us with demands, he is also the Brother who confers on us gifts from God."³³⁵

Aulén recounts Hammarskjöld's regard for the dramatic aspect of the struggle between good and evil. Here again, Hammarskjöld links this conflict with creation; God is "continually creating through the power of his goodness; the opposite to creation is chaos."³³⁶ And he bluntly poses the question: "Do you create? or destroy?"³³⁷ Creation functions as a pivotal theme in Hammarskjöld's Markings, and Aulén emphasizes this in his own exposition.³³⁸ Further, the creative activity of God finds special expression in forgiveness.³³⁹ In this decisive, dramatic struggle the genuine image of God appears in Christ and "utters the decisive word about the divine love, victoriously manifested in sacrifice."³⁴⁰ On the other hand, Aulén recalls Hammarskjöld's displeasure with those ideas which distort the image of God in dealing with human suffering:

That piece of blasphemous anthropomorphism: the belief that, in order to educate us, God wishes us to suffer. How far from this is the assent to suffering when it strikes us because we have obeyed what we have seen to be God's will.³⁴¹

In the final analysis, Hammarskjöld's attention is directed always to the suffering and victorious love of God.

This book, as likewise Jesus in Contemporary Historical Research, reviews the expressions and sentiments of others. As he comments on Dag Hammarskjöld's Markings, Aulén evidences that he endorses the same concepts. For his

soteriological theme of Christus Victor, this particular book manifests Aulén's consistency in dealing with redemption issues in a differing context. While no extended soteriological treatment is given by Hammarskjöld or by Aulén himself in these books, nevertheless, Aulén's basic Christus Victor exposition is clearly visible. As a consequence, one may conclude that the original Olaus Petri lectures of 1930 have accompanied Aulén faithfully during the theological journeys of the next four decades.

F. Faith and the God-picture: Two Major Works Considered

Surveying Aulén's theological contributions, one cannot help notice his career-long preoccupation with two religious themes pertinent to soteriology: the relevance of Christian faith (gudstro), and the notion of the God-picture or God-image (gudsbild). In 1967, Gustaf Aulén published Kristen gudstro i förändringens värld (Christian Faith in a Changing World) which explores Christian belief within the contemporary situation. As the author indicates in the foreword, it was intended as a new work in reply to requests Aulén had received for another printing of his well-known dogmatic treatise, The Faith of the Christian Church (Den allmänneliga kristna tron). Aulén himself discloses that recognizing the need for a substantial revision, he preferred to publish a new book rather than just re-issue the earlier one.³⁴² While Kristen gudstro i förändringens

värld appears thus as the offspring of Den allmänneliga kristna tron, the subject matter is inescapably related to Aulén's 1965 publication, The Drama and the Symbols (Dramat och symbolerna). In many respects, this new book repeats much of the content of The Drama and the Symbols and forms a concise summary of it. Similarly, Aulén noted in The Drama and the Symbols that his composition took up the religious themes he had explored some forty years before in his investigation of the God-image, Den kristna gudsbilden genom seklerna och i nutiden (The Christian God-picture through the Ages and Today), published in 1927.

Therefore, these two Swedish works, Kristen gudstro i förändringens värld (1967) and Den kristna gudsbilden (1927) manifest respectively Aulén's theological interest in faith-relevance (gudstro) and the God-picture (gudsbild). And while Aulén's topics find development and expansion in presentations such as The Drama and the Symbols, Christus Victor, and The Faith of the Christian Church, these two major books provide an opportunity to assess the author's theological thinking over this forty year span. Hence, a discussion and consideration of both these writings furnishes one with a fuller appreciation for Aulén's fundamental soteriological ideas.

The first noticeable difference that is recognizable upon comparing Kristen gudstro i förändringens värld with Aulén's Den kristna gudsbilden genom seklerna och i nutiden (Das christliche Gottesbild in Vergangenheit und

Gegenwart)³⁴³ is that the former displays a distinct scriptural approach whereas the latter follows the line of a systematic-historical presentation. Secondly, a remarkable similarity of Aulén's major theological affirmations stands out in the two writings; these same positions likewise appear in Aulén's other major publications. Concerning these theological questions, Aulén seems to have altered little in the span of the intervening years.

It is significant to note Aulén's intention in each of these two books and why he considers the various topics important. In Kristen gudstro i förändringens värld, he concerns himself with the relevance of Christian faith in the contemporary context. Aulén sets a clear scriptural tone for the analysis by centering his first chapter on the biblical witness ("bibelns vittnesbörd").³⁴⁴ By doing so, Aulén manifests Per Erik Persson's contention of a deepened interest in the historical dimension as directly affecting Christian faith distinct from Aulén's previous historical approach as constituting a type of background for the true essence of Christian faith.³⁴⁵ In the earlier work, Das christliche Gottesbild, the author's intention focuses attention on a very crucial topic for systematic theology, both in its historical development and in its application to such critical areas as soteriology. Aulén clearly indicates the connection between his theme and these religious questions; he avows that the history of Christian thought is inextricably linked to its ideas of God. Aulén states:

"Die Geschichte des christlichen Denkens ist daher im Innersten die Geschichte des christlichen Gottesbildes."³⁴⁶ Correctly asserting Luther's principle of the theocentric character of all Christian belief ("Dies folgt mit Notwendigkeit aus des Glaubens 'theo-zentrischem' Charakter. Luthers bekanntes Wort: Gott und der Glaube 'gehören zu Hauf,' gilt unbedingt."),³⁴⁷ Aulén develops his systematic presentation. A key tenet for this consideration centers on Aulén's distinction between a "concept" of God and an "image" or "picture" of God; hence, the importance of the book's title. The author insists on maintaining a sharp difference between a concept and an image of God, speaking of "einer Unterscheidung zwischen Gottesbegriff und Gottesbild" ("guds-begrepp och gudsbild").³⁴⁸ This significant assertion recurs throughout Aulén's theological expositions.³⁴⁹ The author's clear distinction provides an essential focus point for his discussion in The Drama and the Symbols wherein Aulén speaks of knowing God from the symbols employed in the Scriptures and by "contrasting the terms 'image of God' and 'concept of God.'"³⁵⁰ For Aulén, there exists an obvious connection between how one conceives of God and how consequently one understands mankind's redemption; he pinpoints this relationship succinctly: "Das Wichtigste in der Geschichte der Christologie ist die Geschichte des Gottesbildes."³⁵¹

The theological exposition in Kristen gudstro i förändringens värld reflects a summarized version of the

topics surveyed in The Faith of the Christian Church. Aulén carefully explores such areas as faith ("tron"), the picture of God ("vilken gud?"), creation ("skaparen"), the Christ-drama ("Kristusdramat"), salvation ("frälsning"), the Church ("en helig allmänlig kyrka") and Christian hope ("det kristna hoppet"). The tone of the writing is affected obviously by his 1965 book, The Drama and the Symbols, as evidenced in his treatment of the "drama" of Christ. Aulén himself states that the drama notion clearly expresses the meaning of the Gospel presentation of Christ's life and ministry: "Ordet Kristusdrama är ett exakt uttryck för evangeliernas skildringar av Jesu livsverk."³⁵² And almost immediately he underscores the dualistic-antagonistic element involved in the struggle of Christ unto his victory. Aulén demonstrates that the New Testament speaks of this intense struggle with the forces of evil ("under hård kamp mot fientliga makter") culminating in Jesus' death on the cross as the climax in this line of suffering ("höjdpunkt i den lidandeshistoria som avslutas på korset"), but which is at the very same time ("på samma gång"), the fulfillment of Christ's ministry and the beginning of his reign as Lord.³⁵³ The New Testament, Aulén affirms, binds together Christ's ministry as fulfilled in the cross and his continuing sovereignty as Lord: "...korset fullbordade och fullkomnade Jesu livsverk och var på samma gång utgångspunkten för den fortsatta gärning han såsom Kyrios, Herren...."³⁵⁴ This

Christus Victor soteriological perspective expresses the very core of Aulén's redemption view.

Along a parallel line, in Das christliche Gottesbild, Aulén delineates the distinctive picture of God in the New Testament as showing a shift of emphasis from that found in the Old Testament. The characteristic feature of this transformed God-image is the cross as the "seal" and expression of this intense struggle and conflict: "Das Kreuz ist das Siegel darauf und der Ausdruck für das verwandelte Gottesbild."³⁵⁵

Aulén's conception of struggle and conflict figures prominently in both these publications. He speaks of kämpande tro in Kristen gudstro i förändringens värld stressing the assertion that Christian faith must necessarily be understood in a perspective of conflict: "kristen tro är kämpande tro."³⁵⁶ The true picture of God, likewise, must be comprehended in this struggle of formidable opposing forces whereby the world becomes truly a Kampfplatz.³⁵⁷

While Aulén's treatment in Kristen gudstro i förändringens värld follows a pattern of exploring faith, redemption, and the Church in relevancy to the contemporary status of mankind, the 1927 book analyzes the God-picture from a systematic-historical viewpoint surveying Augustine, the Middle Ages, the Reformation, Lutheran Orthodoxy and the theology of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Acknowledging that both writings manifest a unique format

geared to their respective purposes and were written in light of the theological atmosphere of the times, nonetheless, Aulén's basic theological affirmations indicate a substantial consistency and congruency. This is particularly the case in how Aulén handles the problem of salvation. All in all, his soteriological preference advances the classic atonement view so characteristic of his entire theological career.

In the later composition, Aulén discusses the drama of salvation in terms of the Heilsgeschichte pattern. He describes three acts in this drama of God's kingship which express a major biblical theme ("Bibelns huvudtema: Gudsrikesdramat").³⁵⁸ The first act considers the election of Israel ("utkorelsen av ett särskilt folk: Israel"); the second act centers on the person of Jesus ("om dramats första akt koncentrerats till ett enda folk, så koncentreras andra akten till en enda person såsom den huvudagerande: Jesus Kristus"); and the third, presents a continuation of the drama in the Church ("Tredje akten handlar om dramats försettning...Kristi kyrka").³⁵⁹ As Aulén proceeds in his description of the dynamic greatness ("dynamisk storhet")³⁶⁰ of this struggle, he expands on the New Testament perspective of God's love as victorious. His analysis relates directly to the God-picture of the previous publication.

Developing his consideration in Kristen gudstro i förändringens värld, Aulén includes a particular section on

gudsbilden.³⁶¹ He examines God's eternity and God's holiness and the fact that mankind's salvation is not accomplished by any rationalizing compromise, but by confronting all that opposes and attacks the divine will. God's salvific plan discloses a radical opposition to evil and the forces of destruction ("Guds radikala motsättning mot det onda och destruktiva");³⁶² and this is centered in God's love ("Guds kärlek, agape").³⁶³ The divine love is spontaneous ("spontan"); this love constitutes God's essence ("väsen"); and it stands as truly self-giving ("självutgivande").³⁶⁴ The God so manifested in conflict is not characterized by an almightiness ("allmakt"), but as the God who struggles out of love to confront the opposition: "Den Gud som fungerar i gudsriketsdramat är en mot allt detta mångfaldiga onda kämpande Gud." In this drama, Aulén insists that Jesus the Christ plays the decisive role: "...i det gudsrikedrama, där Kristus har den avgörande rollen."³⁶⁵

Aulén furthermore surveys what he terms three mistaken images of God - tre vrågbilder. These are Ödesguden, a God of fate; Verdergällningsguden, a God of retribution or recompense; and Menlöshetsguden, a God of harmlessness and shallow love, a God lacking moral vitality.³⁶⁶ It is interesting that Aulén has included this description of the tre vrågbilder in the 1970 English edition of The Drama and the Symbols, but this section does not appear in the Swedish original (1965) nor in the German translation (1968).³⁶⁷

These faulty divine images destroy the power of the Christian portrayal of God by attempting to minimize the various tensions in the God-picture. Yet, Aulén contends that to understand Christ's salvific work one must not diminish the depth of the God-picture, which emerges as a "tension-filled unity" ("en spänningsfylld enhet").³⁶⁸

In his earlier publication, Aulén enunciates this same concern about distorted presentations of the God-image and their consequences. Also, Aulén's insistence on the clarity of the God-image relates directly to the soteriology Aulén espouses in the Christus Victor atonement view.

As he proceeds in Das christliche Gottesbild, Aulén examines at length the varying depictions of God through Christian history; the chapter headings denote the methodology employed. Augustine's thought is probed under the notion of "Die Dynamis der Liebe"; and, Aulén considers Aquinas, Occam, and the mystics of the Middle Ages as "Die drei Haupttypen des Mittelalters: Ausgleichung, Sprengung, Abgleitung."³⁶⁹ He is particularly critical of the position held by Lutheran Orthodoxy which he describes as "antimoralistischer Legalismus";³⁷⁰ he similarly finds grave fault with the humanizing God-image of the Enlightenment, Schleiermacher and Ritschl expressed as "Das humanisierte Gottesbild."³⁷¹

It surprises no one that Aulén heartily approves the God-picture elucidated by Luther, which the author investigates under the aspect of "unity in opposition,"

"Einheit in den Gegensätzen."³⁷² In the 1965 Swedish edition of Den allmänneliga kristna tron, Aulén surveys this same question under the title, "Gudsbildens spänning och gudsbildens enhetlighet" (Tension and unity in the God-picture).³⁷³ Aulén contends that Luther does not soften or diminish the contrasts in the Christian picture of God with the result that Luther's viewpoint is a richer, stronger and fuller one ("Luthers Gottesbild ist viel reicher, unendlich mächtiger und inhaltsgefüllter....").³⁷⁴ Luther's "synthesis" then expresses fully the tension essentially inherent in Christian faith: "Luthers Synthese ist eine eigene Spannungsvolle Einheit des Glaubenlebens."³⁷⁵

Interpreting Luther's theology, Aulén concisely presents five principal tensions in the God-picture. These appear in varying degrees and in different modes throughout Aulén's other theological work. Herein they are enumerated as follows: God's love and wrath ("Gottes Liebe und Gottes Zorn");³⁷⁶ love and power ("Liebe und Macht");³⁷⁷ God's power and the dualism ("Gottes Macht und der Dualismus");³⁷⁸ God as revealed and as hidden ("Deus revelatus - Deus absconditus");³⁷⁹ God's nearness and God's distance ("Nähe-Abstand").³⁸⁰ Throughout this exposition, Aulén upholds Luther's view that ultimately the image-picture of God is definitively determined by Christ; only this constitutes the qualitatively genuine image. Aulén avows: "Die Qualität des Gottesbildes ist für Luther prinzipiell

durch Christus bestimmt."³⁸¹ The identical concept underlies Aulén's presentation of the Kristusdramat in Kristen gudstro i förändringens värld when he portrays Christ as "Guds agape i mänsklig gestalt."³⁸² To come to a knowledge of God in his being, Aulén argues that Christ is the determining factor since he embodies the depth of God's inner essence, the love revealed in Jesus Christ: "Guds 'väsen' är hans agape och det är denna agape som uppenbaras i Kristus."³⁸³

In Kristen gudstro i förändringens värld, Aulén highlights the dramatic-dynamic posture of God's life-giving and saving love: "Guds agape och den allena är tillvarons livs-givande, livs-bevarande och livs-frälsande makt."³⁸⁴ Here, the dualistic perspective is never distant as God's redemptive love revealed in the Christ-drama engages in fierce conflict with the forces of evil, sin, death and the devil. This antagonism identifies these negative powers opposed to Christ as a conglomerate of evil forces operating in unison together ("De bildar tillsammans en gemensamt opererande fiendemakt").³⁸⁵ Nonetheless, Aulén speaks in terms of a decisive victory over the power of evil, sin, death and the devil: "Kristi gärning, sedd i detta sammanhang, är den avgörande segern över det ondas makt, över synden, döden och djävulen."³⁸⁶ Such a great and unambiguous victory over the hostile powers ("stora och avgörande segern över tillvarons gudsfientliga makter"), which Luther's theology accentuates, brings to the fore once

again the dramatic perspective of the early Christian Church ("urkristna och gammalkyrkliga dramatiska perspektivet").³⁸⁷ Aulén claims that the New Testament holds together inseparably the two focal points of Christ's unique victory, his death and resurrection: "I N.T. är kors och uppståndelse oskiljaktigt förbundna."³⁸⁸ In such unity, the redemptive drama reveals the highest tension and at the same time finds its ultimate resolution: "Kristusdramat når här sin högsta spänning och får på samma gång sin lösning."³⁸⁹

For Aulén, this definitive triumph signifies Christ's unique victory as belonging to God's power alone ("Segern var Kristi egen seger")³⁹⁰ which issues forth in a double perspective both as truly God's work and as the accomplishment of the earthly Jesus: "Denna Kristi seger kan ses under en dubbel aspekt: såsom en Jesu mänskliga gärning och som en gudsgärning."³⁹¹ Aulén's "double aspect" manner of theological presentation appears evident in this context. Christ achieves his decisive victory in full solidarity with sinful mankind ("solidaritet med människorna") and as vicariously undertaking the conflict in man's place ("ställföreträdande handling").³⁹² Aulén's latter assertion does not indicate the compensatory sense inherent in the medieval satisfaction scheme; satisfaction is seen rather as Christ's service/ministry ("förtjänst") accomplished by God's love ("Guds kärlek") without detriment to the fact that salvation belongs to God alone ("Guds egen försoningsgärning").³⁹³ In every sense of the word, Aulén

demonstrates that Christian faith is nothing else than faith in the creating, redeeming and victorious power of God's agape: "...kristen tro är tro på Guds kärleks skapande, frälsande och segrande makt."³⁹⁴

Aulén's image of God's salvific work and victory as presented in Kristen gudstro i förändringens värld is not limited to the more obvious features of the redemptive drama, but inclusively comprehends the whole of divine creativity. The saving God portrayed here is the living and active God: "Den kristna trons Gud är den levande och handlande Guden."³⁹⁵ In this setting, Nathan Söderblom's theological emphasis emerges as readily evident.

Advancing his ideas, Aulén underlines a paramount theological point - the God of creation and of redemption are one and the same: "skapelsens och frälsningens Gud är en och densamme."³⁹⁶ Not only does Aulén's appraisal of God's activity not separate the Incarnation and the atonement, but he likewise upholds the unitary and integral essence of creation and redemption. An identical statement is found in The Drama and the Symbols at the end of the book:

Fundamentally they express the final word on the Christ drama and the image of God: that the God of creation³⁹⁷ and the God of salvation are one and the same.

The origin, meaning, and purpose of creation are revealed in the work of salvation³⁹⁸ that God effects in and through Christ.

What emerges in Aulén's analysis is the picture of a God who continually creates, renews and redeems in conflict

and in ultimate victory. All this is achieved by a God who acts in creation and human history through the person of Jesus Christ; Aulén repeats Einar Billing's familiar theme as capsulized in John 5:17, "My father goes on working and so do I."³⁹⁹ Aulén, further, remains convinced that I John 3:8 summarizes Christ's mission and destiny: "The Son of God appeared in order to undo the works of the devil."⁴⁰⁰ Hence, the Christus Victor theme, while not specifically indicated at each step, dominates Aulén's God-picture and the description of kristen gudstro as surveyed in the 1967 exposition.

Much of how Aulén portrays his God-picture in Das christliche Gottesbild centers on the question of God's love as redemptive and saving. Aulén interprets this love as the "radikal Neue" of the Gospel: "Dies ist das Neue, das radikal Neue im Gottesbild des Evangeliums."⁴⁰¹ He understands this victorious, redeeming love as spontaneous, freely giving of itself and as taking the initiative to seek the lost. This characterization highlights the superiority of such redemptive action over any type of recompense or balancing of an order of justice. In such love one encounters the inner mystery of God. Aulén's writing details this affirmation:

Nicht die Rechtsordnung offenbart das innerste Geheimnis des herzen Gottes, sondern die spontan gebende, freie und souveräne Liebe gibt, weil es ihre Natur ist, zu geben, und ergreift die Initiative, den Verlorenen zu suchen und sich selbst dem Sünder zu geben.⁴⁰²

Expanding this proposal, Aulén advances two vital features of the God-picture found in the Gospel - dualism and eschatology.⁴⁰³ He sharply criticizes those theological movements that have sought to minimize, compromise or explain away these two essential characteristics; Aulén devotes much of this book to examining these various positions. Of course, the dualistic quality forms an essential background to a soteriology of conflict and victory over all that opposes God's will. Christus Victor stands in the midst of this opposition. A typical passage from Das christliche Gottesbild demonstrates the importance of appreciating such a dualism:

Das dualistische Element lässt sich nicht vom Evangelium absondern. Die ganze Lebensbetrachtung ist durchwoben von dem Gedanken des Gegensatzes zwischen Gotteswillen und den dunklen und geheimnisvollen bösen Mächten, die diesem Willen entgegenstehen.⁴⁰⁴

Herein the devil or Satan personifies all evil; Jesus the eventual victor confronts these destructive forces:

Der Satan als das repräsentative Böse ist die Inkarnation all dessen, was dem Gotteswillen widerspricht; er ist der "Feind"....Der Satan treibt seine Werkzeuge auf die Wege des Verderbens....Durch das ganze Dasein geht ein unablässiger Kampf zwischen Gott und Teufel, zwischen Gotteswillen und der Macht des Bösen. In diesen Kampf steht Jesus als das Werkzeug des Gotteswillens.⁴⁰⁵

To understand Aulén's gudsbild as well as his conflict-victory Christology, one must look hard and long at this religious dualism.⁴⁰⁶

Joined to this dualistic feature is Aulén's assertion concerning the eschatological dimension of the Gospel: "Die

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ganze Glaubensanschauung ist eschatologisch bestimmt."⁴⁰⁷ Aulén alleges that there exists an inner, integral connection between these two religious motifs ("Zusammenhang zwischen den eschatologischen und den dualistischen Motiven") with the result that a victory over the destructive forces is simultaneously a triumph for God's kingdom in the present as well as in its fulfillment.⁴⁰⁸

As he progresses in this discussion, Aulén reiterates the importance of the dualistic-eschatological features and interprets them in conjunction with other significant qualities belonging to the God-picture. He outlines four major religious motifs ("vier Hauptmotive"): 1) "das Heiligkeitsmotiv" (the holiness of God);⁴⁰⁹ 2) "das dualistisch-dramatische Motiv" (the dualistic-dramatic element);⁴¹⁰ 3) "das eschatologische Motiv" (the eschatological dimension);⁴¹¹ 4) "das Gemeinschaftsmotiv" (the community aspect.).⁴¹² In Aulén's thinking, these four Hauptmotive contradict all humanizing and depleted notions of God.⁴¹³ While proposing such major motifs, Aulén, nevertheless, stresses the foundation of all Christian belief, the Grundmotiv of love: "das eigentliche christliche Grundmotiv - die souveräne Liebe."⁴¹⁴

Examining the theology of the early Church, Aulén acknowledges that in the Greek thought, one discovers "ein göttliches Werk konzentriert."⁴¹⁵ Yet, he insists that in Luther is found the clearest expression of the depth of God's image and of the salvific work. Admitting the

connection between Luther and the influences of the Middle Ages, he, nonetheless, contends that in Luther there emerges a "ganz neue Einstellung."⁴¹⁶

In Aulén's view, Luther accepts and makes no attempt to diminish the contrasts involved in the Christian God-picture. The Reformer does not push away or soften this stark opposition but rather lets it come to full play; therein emerges a singular unity of opposites ("eine Einheit in den Gegensätzen").⁴¹⁷ Luther's comprehension produces a type of synthesis which manifests a unique tension-filled unity of the faith ("Luthers Synthese ist eine eigene Spannungsvolle Einheit des Glaubens").⁴¹⁸ As far as soteriology is concerned, this holds especially true for the contrast between God's love and wrath.⁴¹⁹ Aulén declares, likewise, that in Luther's mind the differences cannot be fitted into a rationalized picture: "Luthers Hinweis in der Frage der Qualität des Gottesbildes auf Christus hat eine doppelte Spitze: contra rationem und contra legem."⁴²⁰ Aulén's analysis of contra rationem et contra legem appears prominently in the Luther treatment of the Olaus Petri lectures:

...Luther, if he is sure of anything, is sure that God's work in Christ of atonement, forgiveness, justification, bears the signature contra rationem et legem. In his view, Law and Reason belong inseparably together; they represent the way of the natural man, not God's way manifested in Christ.⁴²¹

It is not difficult to appreciate the connection between what Aulén maintains in this study of Luther's

God-picture and the subsequent consideration in the published Christus Victor. Aulén delights in explaining Luther's soteriology as one of conflict and the final victory of self-giving, sovereign divine love:

...durch Luther eine neue und starke Farbe:
Christus wird mit Vorliebe als Gottes Streiter
und Sieger betrachtet.⁴²²

Seine Liebestat wird unter den Gesichtspunkt des
Kampfes und des Sieges gesehen.⁴²³

As Aulén surveys Luther's thinking, he illustrates how Luther envisions the contrasts in the God-image and in the salvific work come to a resolution. God either overcomes the evil forces or turns opposition and contrast to the service of his sovereignty. Aulén's scrutiny of Luther's viewpoint concerning the question of God's love and wrath presents a particularly acute example. Aulén terms it "revolutionary":

Der Zorn steht im Dienst der göttlichen Liebe und ist somit ein Ausdruck dieser Liebe. Dies bedeutet vom dogmenhistorischen Gesichtspunkt aus eine Revolution. Niemand in der ganzen Geschichte des christlichen Gedankens vor Luther hat so organisch und so "synthetisch" vom Verhältnis zwischen Gottes Liebe und seinem Zorn zu sprechen vermocht....⁴²⁴

Der Zorn...aber für das Glaubensauge im Dienst der Liebe steht, ist beides: ein Mittel und ein Ausdruck der Liebe. Er ist allzeit in der Liebe eingeschlossen. Ist er nicht in Funktion, ist er latent da, "aufgehoben" in Hegelschem Sinne.⁴²⁵

Aulén reiterates the contention that Luther's comprehension of the motifs in the God-image exhibits a double aspect ("die Doppelseitigkeit"); yet this duality must be maintained for the integrity and truth inherent

therein.⁴²⁶ Aulén appreciates the point that Luther's thinking is not a closed, fixed system of theology ("Hier gibt es nichts 'Fertiges'.").⁴²⁷ On the other hand, Lutheran Orthodoxy seeks to provide such solutions; Aulén avows that this endeavor is doomed to complete failure ("Wenn die Orthodoxie dieses Fertige sucht, sucht sie etwas, das sie nicht finden konnte.").⁴²⁸ The author strongly reproves the "neue Scholastik" of Lutheran Orthodoxy which breaks down Luther's rich religious thinking and renders it powerless ("...dass die tiefsten Motive Luthers gebrochen wurden und sich nicht in ihrer vollen Kraft geltend machen konnten.").⁴²⁹ Just as in Luther Aulén perceives a "unity in contrasts" ("Einheit in den Gegensätzen"), so he observes in Lutheran Orthodoxy a strange and untenable legalism based upon a foundation opposed to moralism ("antimoralistischer Legalismus").⁴³⁰

This "anti-moralistic legalism" and "new scholasticism" of Lutheran Orthodoxy pose a problem for Luther's atonement thinking. Aulén argues that these positions are tied to a Latin view of satisfaction but with even more disastrous effects. Such a theology stresses punishment and substitution, in far greater measure than Anselm does, with detrimental consequences for the picture of God.⁴³¹ Anselm's aut poena aut satisfactio is transformed into necessary poena and such punishment is borne heroically by Christ who fulfills the law in mankind's stead.⁴³² A legalistic approach to the law dominates; the

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Anselmian reasoning is led to a rigid conclusion; the notion of Luther's "unity in opposition" vanishes. Whatever idea of struggle and conflict remains becomes identified with an opposition between righteousness and love:

Das dualistische Motiv, der Gegensatz zwischen der göttlichen Liebe und der Macht des Bösen, wird zu einem Gegensatz zwischen der göttlichen Gerechtigkeit und der göttlichen Liebe umgebogen. Die Versöhnung wird ein Ausgleich der Spannung zwischen der göttlichen Gerechtigkeit und der göttlichen Liebe, anstatt ein Sieg der Liebe über das Böse.⁴³³

Aulén repeats this negative judgment of Lutheran Orthodoxy in Christus Victor as well as in The Drama and the Symbols.⁴³⁴ The notion that Lutheran Orthodoxy, especially in its presentation of God and the atonement, has proved unfaithful to Luther's intention and expression, constitutes a recurring refrain in Aulén's writing.

Reviewing these two noteworthy Aulén publications, one can easily discern the importance they possess for his soteriological position. The intimate relationship between the God-image, Christian faith and the atonement stands out unmistakably. Likewise, both these books demonstrate a solid consistency in Aulén's major theological viewpoints throughout the many decades of his long career.

Much of the criticism as well as the strength of Aulén's Christus Victor presentation centers on Aulén's interpretation of the major theological figures influencing soteriological thinking - Irenaeus, Anselm and Martin Luther. It is to these figures that we must look in order to understand more fully Gustaf Aulén's redemption ideas.

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